TRANSLOCAL DIGITAL AUTHORING: IDENTITY NEGOTIATION PROCESSES THROUGH MULTIMODAL LITERACIES AMONG GIRLS WHO WERE RESETTLED AS REFUGEES FROM THAILAND

by

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ABSTRACT

Grounded in a critical sociocultural theory of literacy that draws on elements of postcolonial feminism, postmodern geography, and cultural studies, my dissertation study focuses on language and its use in digital multimodal literacy practices. This ethnographic study took place from January to September 2013 in the Mya Community Center (a pseudonym), which served youth resettled as refugees. I engaged with nine teenage girls who were resettled from the Thailand-Burma border. Through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document collection, I focused on ways in which language was used in multimodal and digital literacy practices for complex negotiations of identity, agency, and power. The findings illustrate how, depending on the intersections of their social contexts, the girls enacted complex identities that included their individual perspectives on cultural belonging, friendships, love, and affinities through language and literacy practices. The findings also show that the girls' language learning and maintenance, along with their literacy practices, were impacted by historical and spatial contexts of their global lived experiences. This study seeks to disrupt the homogenous and deficit-oriented representations of young refugee women and girls by focusing on the ways in which they actively construct, or author, themselves through language and literacy in global digital spaces.

For mom

&

Brian

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CHAPTER 1

AUTHORING THROUGH LITERACY PRACTICES

Each year, thousands of young people resettle in the United States as refugees, as a result of forcible displacement. They represent a very small portion of the global refugee population; a mere 1% of the more than 15 million refugees resettled around the world, with less than 80,000 resettled annually in the United States. Unlike traditional immigrants, refugees, escaping various forms of persecution rooted in complex political histories, flee their homes in search of safety without a predefined destination (Trinh, 2010). Each has a unique story to tell about who they are, based on their memories, knowledge, positions, and experiences across multiple social, political, and historical contexts. These complex stories are marked by loss and displacement, but also survival. They are shaped by experiences that vary greatly based on intersections of gender, ethnicity, race, language, class, and other factors (Hyndman, 2010). While the stories of young women often reflect their strength and knowledge, academic refugee education literature often highlights their challenges and minimizes the complexities of their experiences.

While resettled students' narratives are present in various nonfiction and documentary works (e.g., Davenport & Mandel, 2010; Pipher, 2002), the voices of resettled youth are rare in refugee education literature. Refugee students are often spoken

for by researchers, and at times by their parents and teachers in academic literature on pre- and postresettlement experiences. Students are often positioned as victims of trauma, which prior to resettlement is related to persecution, violence, and loss, and following resettlement to depression, prejudice, and assimilation. Women and girls in particular are represented as especially vulnerable, due to gender-based violence, limited access to schooling, and early marriage, prior to migration, followed by depression and disrupted family dynamics after resettlement (Bolloten & Spafford, 1998; Dachyshyn, 2008; Jones & Rutter, 1998; Sommers, 2001; Whittaker, 2006; Yule, 1998). Although these are struggles that many displaced women encounter, it is crucial to recognize the heterogeneity and multiple dimensions of displacement experiences, along with their rootedness in complex social and political histories.

Representations of refugee women and girls in some scholarly literature often reflect those prevalent in dominant discourses, such frequent mass media portrayals of refugee women as suffering, helpless, or crying. These images reflect academic and mainstream written representations of refugee women, where minimal attempts are made to portray their heterogeneity and disrupt their monolithic construction. While the women's national origin (e.g., Sudanese, Somali, Afghan) is often noted in these representations, limited attention is paid to how multiple intersecting factors such as ethnicity, language, social histories, imperial or colonial legacies of power, and other forms of structural oppression have shaped individual women's experiences as refugees.

Just as young refugee women's voices are limited in refugee education literature, formal educational practice is also informed by monolithic representations of a refugee experience. This representation offers a limited perspective on how refugee women

enrolled in K-12 US schools define themselves, and negotiate, express, and enact particular identities based on cultural wealth gained through their experiences (Yosso, 2005).

A limited representation of refugee voices in the education literature is concerning because refugee youth adaptation frequently takes place in schools (Anderson et al., 2003; Hamilton, 2003) – schools that are often underprepared to support resettled students (Dooley, 2009; Li, 2008a, 2008b; Roxas, 2011). In school contexts, students and their families often face unwelcoming environments that include discrimination, racism, and devaluation of their knowledge (Adams & Kirova, 2006; Li, 2008a; Roxas, 2011). Their linguistic and cultural wealth, including literacy practices, and the identities negotiated based on those ways of knowing and being in the authoring process, are often devalued, or as Trinh (2010) states, *refused.*[1] As a result, many youth with refugee backgrounds are treated "as objects of correction and remediation" (Campano, 2007, p. 54), incapable of completing grade-level work (Dooley, 2009), and not deserving of opportunities to voice their educational goals and concerns (Li, 2008b; Roxas, 2011). These constructions illustrate the previously outlined resettled students' representations as a monolithic "Other," who is weak and vulnerable, and consequently lacking cultural wealth, while at the same time their identities, agency, and knowledge are *refuse(d)*.

In recent years, some scholars have begun to focus on strength and resilience of those resettled as refugees (Anderson, 2003; Chatty, 2010; Siddiquee & Kagan, 2006), while others specifically question the way that refugee students are represented in the academic literature. Although very few studies focus on displaced girls specifically, some

[1] Trinh (2010) writes that, in addition to *refuge* and *refugee*, *refuse* is a key term that defines experiences of displacement and exile.

have begun to point to the ways in which young refugee women enact agency as they draw on cultural wealth to negotiate, voice, and express who they are in the US context (Campano, 2007; Mosselsson, 2006; Oikonomidoy, 2009; Warriner, 2004). For example, Oikonomidoy (2009) finds that Somali female high school students in her study had a very strong sense of identity that emerged from cultural heritage and belonging, which one student described as "sticking to what you are" (p. 30). Campano (2007) also shows how a 10-year-old student from Laos and Thailand in his elementary classroom transforms from a quiet student, whose quietness was perceived as a deficit by the school, into a passionate writer, demonstrating a desire to tell her "survival story" (Campano, 2007, p. 67).

While scholars like Oikonomidoy (2009) and Campano (2007) show that displaced and resettled female students enact strong identities in new educational contexts, we still know little about the process of identity negotiation. This dissertation focuses on better understanding this identity negotiation process by engaging with adolescent girls[2] who were resettled as refugees. It specifically engages with their understanding, experience, and expression of this identity negotiation, or self-authoring process, which included the intersections of identity enactments, agency, and power.

Grounded in a critical sociocultural theory of literacy that draws on elements of postcolonial feminism, postmodern geography and cultural studies, I carried out a qualitative study using ethnographic methods, focusing on language and its use in literacy

[2] The participants self-identified as girls, which is why the term "girls" is used in this dissertation instead of "women" or "young women." Self-identification here represents an act of agency, which is increasingly being taken up in emerging research in girls' studies that focus specifically on girls, their experiences, and socialization (e.g., see Kearney, 2009).

practices to examine the voicing and expression of identity negotiation that occurs through local and global contexts in the authoring processes of several young refugee women and girls living in the US context. Language, and its use in literacy practices, provides an interesting focus point as it links multiple locations—personal, physical, actual, or imagined—linking us to home, wherever home may be. As Trinh (2010) illustrates, language is an important link between the self and one's experiences shaped by migration and displacement:

> Language remains this inexhaustible reservoir from which noises, proverbs and stories continue to flow when water is scarce. Thus it is not 'It' that travels. It is 'I' who carries here and there a few fragments of It. … For memory and language are places both of sameness and otherness, dwelling and traveling. Here, language is the site of return, the warm fabric of a memory, and the insisting call from afar, back home. But here also, there, and everywhere, language is a site of change, an ever-shifting ground. (p. 28)

As language is flexible, innovative, and dynamic, it allows for complex negotiations of self through the authoring process. Focusing on language and its use in literacy practices begins to highlight the heterogeneity of the experiences of refugee women, while allowing possibilities for disrupting the discursive construction of the singular refugee woman who is weak and lacking cultural wealth.

Often, multilayered enactments of self are expressed as well as constructed through multilingual literacy practices in various contexts. Given the particular displacement experiences of refugees, these literacy practices are often multimodal as well as translocal. Multimodal literacy refers to engagement with multiple textual modalities, including writing, images, and videos, which can be facilitated through digital media such as the Internet (Kress, 2003). For example, Siddiquee and Kagan (2006) show how digital multimodal literacies played an important role among refugee women in the

United Kingdom who communicated with friends and family through email, using written text in combination with images to rebuild and maintain relationships. These multimodal literacy practices create local and global possibilities for interaction and identity negotiation in the authoring process. Situated in a complex sociohistorical context of displacement, these practices are often translocal.

In contrast to the broadly used term "transnational," Appadurai's (1996) conceptualization of translocality is useful for this study, as it focuses on the productions of localities following migration and displacement. This concept complicates the notions of belonging and identity in relation to particular places, understanding that they may extend beyond those imposed by nation states. Translocality in this study will acknowledge how communities draw upon their collective memories as well as lived experiences with displacement and migration to produce localities in physical and online spaces that bridge various experiences of place. For example, although they spent their childhoods in Thailand, the girls in this study drew upon their families' memory, language, and lived experience in Burma and the Karen State in Burma as well as their own experience in Thailand to construct a translocal space in a digital setting that supports connection building with others who may share similar experiences.

This study fills a gap in the academic literature by enhancing our understanding of how young girls with refugee backgrounds use various forms of text, media, and communication to negotiate their identities in authoring processes in a translocal context. Specifically, this study focuses on the varied stories these young women told and constructed about themselves in their authoring processes through multimodal literacy practices in digital spaces.

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. *How do nine teenage girls who were resettled as refugees from Thailand engage in authoring processes through multimodal literacy practices in translocal spaces?*
2. *How do their linguistic and cultural resources impact their authoring processes?*
3. *How do they use literacy practices to produce translocal spaces in which the authoring takes place?*

The purpose of the study was to consider the multiple ways in which identities are enacted through authoring processes that are mediated by a variety of tools and shaped by different local and global contexts. The purpose was not to make generalizations about identities that girls with refugee backgrounds share, but to better understand the processes through which they enact various identities.

In the following section, I outline the key elements of critical sociocultural theory of literacy, this study's theoretical framework, which draws on critical perspectives from postcolonial feminist theory, postmodern geography and cultural studies. This theoretical approach allowed for an in-depth engagement with the research questions, bringing together the conceptualizations of literacy practices, multimodality, and translocality to illuminate the heterogeneity of identities and spaces, as illustrated through the girls' authoring processes. Lastly, I will illustrate how these conceptualizations come together to illustrate what the critical sociocultural theory of literacy in this study, specifically in relation to how young women resettled as refugees negotiate their identities through multimodal literacy practices in translocal spaces.

Theoretical framework: Critical sociocultural theory of literacy

In this section I outline the critical sociocultural theory of literacy framework that guides this study, bringing together critical perspectives on multimodal literacy, identity authoring processes, and translocality of young women. This framework draws on sociocultural perspectives on literacy practices, with a particular focus on the ways in which social, spatial, political, and historical contexts intersect with the identity authoring processes that take place in these practices.

Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical elements that constituted the critical sociocultural theory of literacy in this study.

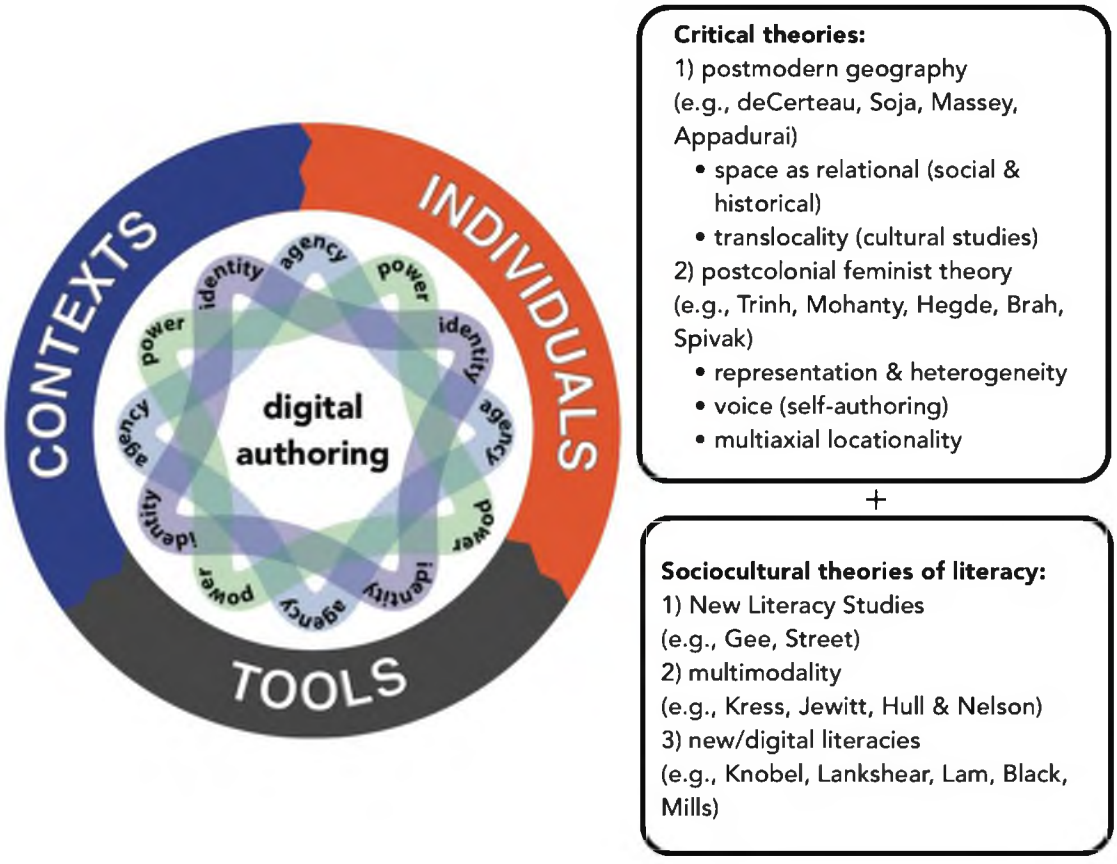

Figure 1: Critical Sociocultural Theory of Literacy

The figure illustrates how digital authoring, the focus of this study, represents a form of literacy practice through which identities are enacted. To understand these identity enactments from a sociocultural theory perspective, it is important to consider the various contexts, individuals' social networks, and mediating tools (e.g., language, literacy, and technology), which frame this digital authoring activity. Critical theories, and particularly spatial and postcolonial feminist theories, support the understanding of the ways in which power intersects contexts, discourses, and potentials for self-representation. Sociocultural perspectives on literacy support the exploration of authoring processes as forms of literacy practices.

In this section, I begin by providing an overview of the foundations of sociocultural theory to frame the activity of digital authoring as a literacy practice. Next, I discuss literacy theories that support the understanding of literacy as a social practice: New Literacy Studies (Gee, 2012; Street 1993), multimodality (Kress, 2003), and digital/new literacies (Knobel & Lankshear, 2008). Because sociocultural theory and literacy as a social practice theories do not provide sufficient critical depth, I next explain how I envisioned the critical aspect of critical sociocultural theory (Lewis, Enciso & Moje, 2007). Specifically, I consider critical perspectives related to spatiality and authoring processes, taking into account the dynamics of power by drawing on elements of postmodern geography and cultural studies to conceptualize space, place, displacement, and translocality (Appadurai, 1996; Brah, 2005; Massey, 2005; Soja, 2004). In addition, I draw on feminist postcolonial perspectives to complicate the sociocultural understandings of authoring processes of girls who were resettled as refugees (Hegde, 1998; Mohanty, 2005; Trinh, 2010).

Sociocultural theory

Sociocultural theory assumes that any human action cannot be separated from the social, cultural, and historical context in which it takes place (Wertsch, 1991). As this study focuses on the activity of digital authoring through literacy practices, theorizing digital authoring processes from a sociocultural theoretical perspective requires a consideration of the participants and their social networks, the multiple contexts in which their authoring processes take place, and the tools that the participants used to engage in their authoring processes. These interconnected elements constitute the sociocultural framings for the activities digital authoring processes.

Mikhail Bakhtin's work provides a useful orientation to understanding *dialogicality* as a central characteristic of theorizing actions and activities from a sociocultural perspective. Individuals' social interaction and meaning-making processes during particular activities, such as digital authoring, are always enacted and shaped dialogically within their social networks and contexts. Bakhtin's conceptualization of an "utterance" is useful for understanding the dialogical process in meaning-making. Dialogicality is a concept that describes the points at which utterances interact with each other; each utterance is influenced by another that has occurred in the past, along with anticipated utterances that may occur in the future. Thus an utterance is situated in broader contexts and is an "active participant in social dialogue" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 276). As Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) indicate, people make sense of their daily activities by constructing meanings based on the shared historical experiences, and thus "most of their constructions are not original" (p. 36). They draw on utterances they have experienced through their previous social interactions across multiple contexts,

while also anticipating social responses in future interactions. Thus, from a sociocultural theoretical perspective, meaning-making is never an individual pursuit, but it is always situated in social practices, and consequently, the power systems that operate within those practices. Therefore, in this study, the digital authoring processes were constructed dialogically – among the participants and within their social networks, as well as through their lived experiences across multiple local and global contexts.

In addition to understanding dialogicality as a critical component of sociocultural theory, it is also important to consider L. S. Vygotsky's arguments that activities are not only dialogical, but that they are also mediated by tools such as language and literacy (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). From this perspective, language and literacy are tools that enable meaning-making in social practices, while also influencing behavior and enabling conceptualization of possible future action. For example, people may use language to develop strategies such as mnemonic devices to actively control their memory in the future (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). As a semiotic system, literacy is also a tool within the sociocultural perspectives, as it enables a multitude of daily actions and activities through multiple meaning-making modes – including textual, visual, and aural. As literacy practices take place in digital spaces, technology, including computers, tablets, and smart phones, also represents an important mediating tool for activities such as digital authoring processes.

The authoring process

Authoring is a concept in sociocultural theory that represents identity negotiation as a form of a socially practiced activity. In this study, authoring represents a form of

literacy practice as framed by social, historical, and political contexts and enacted through tools that included literacy, language, and technology. To conceptualize the authoring process in this study, I draw from sociocultural perspectives that consider identity enactments as expressions of agency within various contexts. In these contexts, the girls author themselves dialogically and often in response to how they are authored by others.

In the authoring process, we make sense of our broader contexts and ourselves within those contexts: "The self is a position from which meaning is made, a position that is 'addressed' by and 'answers' others and the 'world' (the physical and cultural environment). In answering, … the self 'authors' the world—including itself and others" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 173). In the authoring process we impact the world around us, through actions and discourse, while at the same time being impacted (and authored) by historical and contemporary actions and discourses. In this process, identities are actively negotiated and situated in broader social, historical, and cultural contexts.

I draw on a critical sociocultural perspective on identity, considering identities as enactments of socially and historically situated selves: "people take selves and subjectivities with them from space to space and relationship to relationship… they enact a particular version of self that is appropriate to a time, space, relationship, or activity" (Lewis & Moje, 2003, p. 1983). From this perspective, identities are dynamic and enacted according to particular social practices, representing a "self in practice" instead of a "self in essence" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 32). Thus, I consider identities to represent processes that demonstrate agency through enactments and understandings of self, which are

always connected to lived experiences, social practices, and Discourses, within a particular time and space.

Holland et al. (1998) argue that one's identities are always in action and interconnected with agency. More specifically, voice as a "largely rhetorically constructed manifestation of selfhood" is central to the development of understanding, or authoring, and consequent enactments of self (Canagarajah, 2004, p. 267). Lewis and Moje (2003) write that agency "can be thought of as the strategic making and remaking of selves; identities; activities; relationships; cultural tools and resources; histories" (p. 1985) through language. In this study, I assume that agency and voice are put into practice through identity enactments that are performed through language and literacy practices. However, it is necessary to consider how power intersects with the potentiality of agency during identity enactments (Hegde, 1998).

To conceptualize agency during identity enactments, it is helpful to draw on the "making worlds" concept, which illustrates the creative potential of identity enactments (Holland et al., 1998). It illustrates a process by which people's agency and creativity create possibilities for new Discourses to come about. "Making worlds" is rooted in Vygotsky's theorization of play: "Just as children's play is instrumental in building their symbolic competencies, upon which adult life depends, so too social play— the activities of "free expression," the arts and rituals created on the margins of regulated space and time—develops new social competencies in newly imagined communities" (p. 273). Through creativity and play in social practices, agency is a reflection of opportunities for change. For example, playful enactments of imagined identities through literacy practices

may develop possibilities for exploring new and different identity enactments in the future.

Sociocultural theory of literacy

Because authoring is conceptualized as a form of literacy practice in this study, it is important to specifically consider the sociocultural theory of literacy perspectives. Sociocultural theory of literacy focuses on literacy practices as activities within social and historical contexts, and as mediated by tools such as language. Theories of language and literacy as a social practice are central to the understanding of the sociocultural theory of literacy. In addition to Bakhtin's (1981) conceptualization of language as dialogic, Pennycook's (2010) conceptualization of language as living, dynamic, and ideological, and specifically *as* action. Considering language and other semiotic tools as action means to look at language and literacy *as* practice, instead of *in* practice. Therefore, in addition to being a form of a tool that mediates actions, literacy is also a practice as it represents action.

This study draws specifically on a sociocultural theory of literacy, which builds on several theoretical approaches to literacy as a social practice. Pennycook (2010) argues that it is important to delineate the conceptualization of the term "practice," as it is often used without a careful attention to its meaning. Practice can be simply defined as social activity in which interactions take place through language, with an important consideration for time, place, as well as the historical context of the activities taking place. A combination of activities results in practices that organize meaning production and negotiation in social interactions (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007; Knobel & Lankshear,

2008; Pennycook, 2010). When we conceive of language *as* action, as in literacy practice, then we have to recognize its potential to create meaning, as well as the relationships it creates *between* individuals through dialogicality and interaction in particular spaces. The literacy as social practice perspectives in this study include New Literacy Studies (NLS), multimodality, and new/digital literacies.

New Literacy Studies. New Literacy Studies emerged in response to a need to recognize the social contexts of literacy. NLS scholars (e.g., Gee; Heath; Lankshear & Knobel, Scribner and Cole; Street; etc.) challenge traditional views on literacy as an ahistorical skill to read and write (Gee, 2012; Hamilton, 2000; Purcell Gates, 2007; Street, 1993). Because literacy is embedded in social contexts, as Street (1993) notes, literacy practices are *ideological*, as they are shaped by historical, political, and cultural contexts in which they take place. This view differs from a more traditional view of reading and writing, or what Street calls an *autonomous* view of literacy, which presumes that literacy is a decontextualized and power-neutral set of skills that can be learned. As Janks (2010) illustrates, distinctions are often created between literacies within dominant discourses. For instance, students' literacy practices outside of school, such as digital writing, participation in online video gaming communities, or reading and writing in English varieties deemed nonstandard, are often not reflected or validated within schools in which literacy is treated as a discrete set of cognitive skills (Mills, 2010). Thus, the ideological view "signals quite explicitly that literacy practices are aspects not only of 'culture' but also of power structures" (Street, 1993, p. 7), where "not all literacies are equally powerful" (Janks, 2010, p. 119). In his seminal work that has helped establish New Literacy Studies, *Social Linguistics and Literacies*, James Gee (2012) exemplifies

features of literacy that illustrate that language and its use in literacy are social practices. He argues that our ability to make meaning of something, such as reading a comic strip or a piece of academic writing, requires particular types of background knowledge that results from being immersed in various social practices. Thus we make meaning through literacy based on our experiences in particular contexts, or what he calls "Big D" Discourses,[3] in which "people not only read texts of this type in this way, but also talk about such texts in certain ways, hold certain attitudes and values about them, and socially interact over them in certain ways" (Gee, 2012, p. 41). In this sense, literacy practices are embedded in broader social practices and their political and historical contexts, and cannot be taken apart and looked at singularly and separately, because as Gee notes, Discourses are "always and everywhere social products of social histories" (p. 3). As such, Discourses, along with the social practices and identity enactments that take place within them are dynamic and always evolving.

From the NLS perspective, literacy practices include various "recognized ways of generating, communicating, and negotiating meanings" based on texts (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011, p. 37). Barton and Hamilton (2000) write that it is not possible to observe literacy as a social practice, because it is situated in social contexts, or Discourses, which include "ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing" (Gee, 2012, p. 3). Thus it is important to highlight smaller units of these practices, which include *literacy events* and *encoded texts*. Literacy events are

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[3] Gee (2012) makes a distinction between "big D" and "little d" D/discourses. Discourses (big D) include ways of using language (which are little d discourses) along with "ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing…" (p. 3). They represent ways of being, behaving, and understanding, while the little d discourses represent language in use in social practices.

observable points in time "which are mediated by written texts" (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 9), and more specifically *encoded texts* (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). Encoded texts, which are texts that are recorded in some form, such as writing or a video, carry the potential to make meaning within a Discourse. A person reading a blog represents an example of a literacy event, in which the blog is an encoded text. Although literacy practices are not observable, they can be inferred by taking into account multiple literacy events that take place in particular Discourses. Thus, for example, meaning-making that accounts for a person's ways of thinking, believing, and interacting with blogs can be better understood following observations and discussions that focus on a series of blog reading events.

Multimodality and new/digital literacies. Although New Literacy Studies perspectives focus on literacy as a social and ideological practice broadly, multimodal and digital theories of literacy focus specifically on the ways in which multiple semiotic modes are used in meaning production, as well as the emergence of how those multiple modes are used in digital media settings**.** I draw on these theoretical perspectives to build on the New Literacy Studies perspective and better understand the literacy practices used as tools for the authoring processes in this study.

Literacy events take place around various types of encoded texts, which may include traditional reading and writing, along with other dynamic forms of literacy that may include visual representations, such as images and videos that interact with written text to produce meanings (Heath & Street, 2008; Kress, 2003). These dynamic forms of literacy are known as *multimodal literacies*, as they rely upon combinations of different modes, including visual, aural, verbal, and textual to produce potentials for meaning-

making (Jones & Hafner, 2012). Multimodality aligns with the New Literacy Studies perspective by accounting for literacy as a social practice and recognizing that reading and writing of text may include dynamic representations of text with visual representations of meaning (Kress, 2003). For example, participating in an online interaction through a text-based email can have a different meaning than a similar interaction that is accompanied by an image. Multimodal literacy thus provides a different approach to representation and interpretation of meaning. It complicates the understanding of how textual representation is organized, from more linear and static (e.g., a text-only novel) to more dynamic and fluid (e.g., a digital novel that incorporates video, images, and sound) (Jones & Hafner, 2012).

Although multimodal literacy is not a new phenomenon (Thomas, Joseph, Laccetti, Mason, Mills, Perril, & Pullinger, 2007), recent growth in digitally mediated literacy practices has provided opportunities for new ways of integrating multiple semiotic modes. As Mills (2010) illustrates, in recent years there has been a "digital turn" in literacy studies, given a growth in literacy that is digitally mediated. Mills (2010) stresses the importance of "recognition that interpreting and representing ideas and information in social contexts, both inside and outside of schools, is increasingly digitized" (pp. 247-248). This has led to new ways to theorize literacy practices in a field called new literacies, sometimes also referred to as digital literacies. New literacies differs from New Literacy Studies, as it focuses primarily on emerging literacy practices that utilize digital tools and settings. Furthermore, new or digital literacies are not reflective solely of one's ability to utilize new technical tools, such as for example smart

phones, tablets, or apps, but include what Knobel and Lankshear (2007) call the "new ethos stuff." The new ethos highlights new meaning-making principles that privilege

> participation over publishing, distributed expertise over centralized expertise, collective intelligence over individual possessive intelligence, collaboration over individuated authorship, dispersion over scarcity, sharing over ownership, experimentation over 'normalization,' innovation and evolution over stability and fixity, creative-innovative rule breaking over generic purity and policing, relationship over information broadcast, and so on. (p. 21)

As such, the dynamic new collaborative and decentralized ethos is supported by digital technology and is a defining characteristic of new literacies. Thus new literacies, or digital literacies, are inclusive of not only the ability to skillfully use technology, but to do so in a creative and collaborative way in which knowledge and expertise is shared and distributed.

Although digital multimodal literacies have created new opportunities for meaning-making, it is important to consider how power intersects the ways in which young people participate in the multimodal and specifically digital multimodal literacy practices. Street (2009) calls for an ideological view of multimodal literacy practices that will also consider the impact of power and "social mediating factors that give meaning to such technologies" (p. 32). Thus, it is important to consider not just access to digital technology and meaning-making through multimodal literacy practices in these spaces, but also the contexts in which these practices take place. For example, we need to consider how different forms of multimodality are perceived in various Discourses, along with the ways in which they continue to reflect the social power structures in which only particular forms of literacy by particular types of youth are seen as legitimate.

To summarize, in this section I have outlined the building blocks of the sociocultural theory of literacy as it informs this study. Specifically, I have defined literacy as a social practice, in which recognized ways of meaning negotiation take place in what Gee (2012) refers to as "Big D" Discourses, through the use of language or "little d" discourses. I have also defined multimodal literacy, as well as its recent digital turn, through which meaning negotiation has evolved to include not only new ways of engaging with various modes of representation, but also new ways of understanding and producing meaning. Although these perspectives recognize literacy as an ideological practice (Street, 1993), which is inseparable from power, they do not allow for an explicit engagement with the ways in which power intersects the activities of digital authoring processes. In the following section I will extend this theoretical grounding to account for additional ways in which power intersects identity negotiations that take place in authoring processes through multimodal literacy practices. In particular, I draw on critical theories that allow for specific consideration of the sociocultural contexts in this study.

(Re)visioning the critical

While sociocultural theory of literacy focuses on mediated literacy practices in social, historical, and cultural contexts, its limitations are that it does not always engage in sufficient depth with the various ways that power intersects those activities and contexts. Lewis, Enciso, and Moje (2007) call for a reframing of sociocultural theory of literacy in ways that would account for the dynamics of power in and across various contexts. Moreover, as Lewis and Moje (2003) indicate, traditional sociocultural theory perspectives do not always "consider how subjects are produced through discourse" (p.

1980) in sufficient depth. In response, they call for a *critical* sociocultural theory of literacy, arguing for an in-depth consideration of the local and global intersections of power through additional theoretical perspectives.

Given this study's engagement with girls who were displaced and then resettled as refugees in the United States, it is important to bring additional critical perspectives to understand their identity authoring processes through multimodal literacy practices. These perspectives allow for a broadened consideration of the ways in which power intersects the various contexts, including social and historical contexts before and after resettlement. Thus, to bring the necessary critical depth to this study, I revision the critical sociocultural framework of literacy by using critical theories to build on the sociocultural perspectives outlined by New Literacy Studies, multimodal theories, and new/digital literacies.

As sociocultural perspectives engage with spatiality on discursive and metaphorical levels, such as for example in the case of "Big D" Discourses (Gee, 2012), I add critical depth to the sociocultural conceptualizations of space and place by bringing in elements of postmodern geography, cultural studies, and postcolonial feminist theory. These additional perspectives provide a better understanding of the ways in which spaces are produced through literacy practices to extend across translocal spaces, which may include real or imagined geographic locations (Appadurai, 1996; Brah, 2005; Massey, 2005; Soja, 2004; Trinh, 2010). From these perspectives, spaces are relational and not static. The relationships that make up these spaces include those between people and historical, social, and political contexts.

I also draw on elements of postcolonial feminist theory to complicate the sociocultural perspectives on identity authoring processes, which represent a negotiation of identity enactments, agency, and power through social practices. A feminist theoretical perspective in particular provides a critical lens for understanding the discursive production of girls and women who were resettled as refugees (Loomba, 2005; Mohanty, 2003; Shome & Hegde, 1998; Spivak, 1998; Trinh, 2010). In the following sections I discuss the various understandings of space that I drew on to shape the integrated conceptualization of spatiality in this theoretical framework, which I follow by outlining the critical perspectives on agency, voice, and representation in relation to authoring processes in discursive and translocal spaces.

Localizing space. To conceptualize literacy practices in relation to translocality, it is important to address the concepts of space and place, localizing elements of sociocultural, postmodern geography, cultural studies, and postcolonial theoretical perspectives in ways that add needed theoretical depth to this framework. Spaces and places are typically talked about as physical, such as for example buildings or parks; as imagined in our individual or shared memories; as virtual, like online discussion boards; or as metaphorical, as in the case of spaces of authoring (Holland et al., 1998) or Big "D" Discourses (Gee, 2012). Our lives bridge many spaces and places, locally and globally, and thus it is important to recognize their interconnections and fluidity, as well as our positionality within them. As Trinh T. Minh-ha (2010) argues: "more of us have come to see, not only that we live in many worlds at the same time, but also that these worlds are, in fact, all in the same place—the place each one of us is here and now" (pp. 55-56).

In this section, I will describe how space and place are defined in this study and illustrate their hybridity and interconnectedness to conceptualize translocal spaces. In addition, I will describe the metaphorical spaces of authoring in which identity processes take place through language and literacy practices, illustrating their relationship to the conceptualization of translocality.

Defining space, place, and (dis)placement. I find the conceptualizations of space and place put forth by Doreen Massey (2005), Edward Soja (2004), and Alastair Pennycook (2010) helpful for understanding the role of these contexts in social practice. In her book, *for space*, Doreen Massey (2005), a critical geographer, writes about the significances as well as the distinctions between space and place. She outlines that the traditional definitions of space and place characterize them as static and fixed. For example, spaces have traditionally been conceived as land without any sociocultural, historic, or political connections. She argues instead for a relational perspective on space, asking what happens to the conceptualization of space if instead of a surface area, we think of space as "meeting up of histories" (p. 4). She argues that viewing space within context gives depth and significance to a particular space, recognizes its connections to heterogeneity, while unfixing it from a static location. Space is a "product of relations" (p. 10), which are also dynamic and fluid. As such, space and relations within space are always open and changing.

Although Massey writes about the production of space through social practices which draw upon specific histories, Edward Soja (2004) calls for a more complex understanding of space. More specifically, he argues for a consideration for the ways in which spaces also shape the social practices: "sociality and spatiality are mutually

constitutive, and this socio-spatial dialectic… develops in space and time as intertwined geographies and histories, as geohistory" (p. xiv). More specifically, he is not arguing for a forefronting of space, but instead for a consideration of how space exists in a trialectic relationship with social and historical contexts.

This conceptualization of space impacts the way we can think about place. Traditionally, place is conceptualized as a location that is bounded by some form of a physical or imagined boundary. For example, a classroom, or the United States on a map, represents a traditional conception of place. However, if, as Massey (2005) writes, "space is rather a simultaneity of stories-so-far, then places are collections of those stories, articulation within the wider power-geometries of space" (p. 130). Applying Soja's trialectic perspective then would mean that places also shape and are shaped by social practices and their histories. While conceptualizing space and place as a trialectic relationship between locations, histories and social practices, it is important to consider the political conditions that underpin relational conceptualizations of space and place, such as relationships to nations, nationhood, and belonging.

Notions of space and place become further complicated when regarded from the perspective of exile and forcible displacement, which may be followed by resettlement or placement. Consequently, through forcible displacement, we are not only disconnected from the physical locations and places where "home" may have been, but we are also moving away from the multiple sociopolitical histories that will continue to make and remake those places, before we journey through or settle in other places with their own dynamic stories. These new places are then populated with the stories, identities, histories, and politics of the past and hybridized with the ones in the new context,

producing new stories, histories, places, and homes. As Trinh T. Minh-ha notes, while the homes of our origins may be far away, for those of us who move and resettle into new places, home becomes where we are: "home is nowhere else but right here, at the edge of this body of mine" (p. 12).

Diasporas as contested spaces. Through a hybridization process, people's memories, stories, and voices of the "homes" far away are maintained and incorporated into the stories and memories of the homes right here. This changes the current place, while recognizing that the homes far away are also changing as they are populated with new histories, memories, and voices. To understand the notion of maintenance of memory of the home far away, in the home that is right here, the concept of diaspora is useful.

Diasporas, according to James Clifford (1994), are communities of "displaced peoples who feel (maintain, revive, invent) a connection with a prior home. This sense of connection must be strong enough to resist erasure through the normalizing processes of forgetting, assimilating, and distancing" (p. 310). For many recently displaced communities, diaspora implies a distance from a homeland, adjustment in a new home, while sometimes including possibilities of return. Diasporic experiences often include both positive and negative experiences:

> Experiences of loss, marginality, and exile (differentially cushioned by class) are often reinforced by systematic exploitation and blocked advancement. This constitutive suffering coexists with the skills of survival: strength in adaptive distinction, discrepant cosmopolitanism, and stubborn visions of renewal. Diaspora consciousness lives loss and hope as a defining tension. (p. 312)

Thus, community participation and survival foster strength and resilience, experiences of diaspora are always further complicated by pressures to assimilate, as well as oppression based on race, ethnicity, gender, and class.

Postcolonial and African Diaspora Studies scholars argue that it is important to historicize the experiences of diaspora (e.g., Brah, 2005; Small, 2009; Weheliye, 2009). In particular, it is critical to consider the historical contexts of the frequently violent conditions that result in global dispersals of people. Weheliye (2009) writes that "diaspora offers pathways that retrace layerings of difference in the aftermath of colonialism and slavery, as well as the effects of other forms of migration and displacement" (p. 162). Thus it is essential to consider the ways in which power functions across historical constructions of different diasporic communities. In addition, it is necessary to consider race, gender, class, age, religion, ethnicity, language, etc. within each community, as "all diasporas are differentiated, heterogeneous, contested spaces, even as they are implicated in the construction of a common 'we'" (Brah, 2005, p. 618). For instance, in a particular community of resettled people from Burma, it is necessary to recognize power distribution within that community and the broader society, such as racism and racialization, as well as different oppressions and privileges based on gender. Because of different positions and locations within complex power relationships, it is necessary to recognize that there is not one monolithic diasporic experience.

Translocality of space. In this study I focus on diasporic refugee communities that developed as a result of displacement due to war and violent persecution. These global communities are frequently maintained through digital connections. It can be argued that young people with refugee backgrounds are transnational because they "have

moved bodily across national borders while maintaining and cultivating practices tied – in varying degrees – to their home countries" (Hornberger, 2007, p. 325). However, the cultural ties many have with places around the world are more complex than particular definitions of nationhood. For example, for a third generation Palestinian who was born and raised in a refugee camp in Jordan (see Chatty, 2010) the notions of belonging to a nation are complicated by a variety of social, political, and historical factors. Thus, I find the use of the term "transnational" limited for the purposes of this study, because it does not sufficiently account for the complex ways of belonging, migration, and displacement experiences. Instead, I draw on Appadurai's (1996) conceptualization of *translocality* to understand the girls' literacy practices in the global context.

Appadurai (1996) argues that as people move, those forcibly displaced as the most drastic example, they produce new spaces and new localities away from their national locations. They build connections from those locations, which may be based on a shared memory of a particular national space, but which may never actually take place within the boundaries of that place. For example, those displaced from Palestine may connect with others with similar displacement histories, without having any lived experiences in this contested geographic physical space. The notions of belonging to Palestine depend on the histories of that place (Massey, 2005), as well as the social practices through which those histories are drawn upon (Soja, 2011) to produce these translocal spaces around the globe (Appadurai, 1996). Thus, translocality is a more productive conceptualization for this study, as it provides a way to understand the complexities of spatial belonging and identities in relation to lived experiences as well as imaginations across multiple physical spaces.

In this theoretical framework, it is important to consider how positionality intersects with the productions of translocal spaces. Brah (2003) discusses "a position of multiaxial locationality" (p. 628), which considers not only physical, but also imagined locations. This multiaxial position represents "locationality in contradiction—that is, a positionality of dispersal; of simultaneous situatedness within gendered spaces of class, racism, ethnicity, sexuality, age; of movement across shifting cultural, religious and linguistic boundaries; of journeys across geographical and psychic borders" (p. 628). Multiaxial positionality provides an important orientation that I will use to broaden the concept of translocality to consider how girls with refugee backgrounds produce and participate in translocal spaces, within diverse systems and legacies of power.

These translocal spaces, many of which are produced through multimodal literacy practices, allow opportunities for negotiation and expression of identities. These negotiations, which include dialogical relationships between identities, agency, and power are authoring processes that take place in metaphorical spaces, discussed below.

Metaphorical spaces. While the practice of producing translocal spaces can be traced to real or imagined geographic locations, the process in which people negotiate their identities in relation to those locations also takes place in metaphorical spaces. To better understand the social and cultural contexts of identity authoring processes through multimodal literacy practices in translocal spaces, the metaphorical concepts of "Big D" Discourses (Gee, 2012) and "space of authoring" (Holland et al., 1998) are helpful.

Gee (2012) defines Big D Discourses as "distinctive ways of speaking/listening and often, too, writing/reading *coupled* with distinctive ways of acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, dressing, thinking, believing with other people and with various objects,

tools, and technologies, so as to enact specific socially recognizable identities engaged in specific socially recognizable activities" (p. 152). He argues that Discourses, which include how we use language and for what purpose, are also reflections of particular social identities situated in particular social, political, and historical contexts. Thus, in particular Discourses people enact identities that others in a Discourse would recognize (e.g., as being a graduate student with an interest in multimodal literacy practices), engaging in meaning-making activities that would be recognized (e.g., sharing peer-reviewed articles), through languages that express particular ways of knowing (e.g., understanding what it means to be a graduate student).

In addition to Discourses, the space of authoring is another concept that serves as a context for identity negotiation. In this space one's Discourses interact and shape each other dialogically. The space of authoring is conceptualized based on Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia, or multivoicedness. Heteroglossia accounts for many social languages instead of a unitary one on which we rely in the process of "authoring." This authoring process, which will be described in greater depth in the following section, is dialogical. It merges together individual identity enactments, and thus their agency, with the extent to which those identity enactments are recognized based on the sociopolitical histories of Discourses in which they take place. So, for example, my understanding and conceptualization of what it means to be a student in graduate school is based on the Discourses I've encountered as a participant, partner, friend, and colleague, as well as my own experiences and identity enactments in additional Discourses. The space of authoring then is defined by the convergence of various social voices along with various dimensions of power that they carry.

In this section, I have provided an overview of how various dimensions of space, including physical, imagined, and metaphorical, shape the contexts of identity authoring processes in this critical sociocultural theory of literacy. In the following section, I will focus on outlining the authoring process, as conceptualized in this framework, illustrating in particular the intersections of identity negotiation, agency, and power.

Agency, voice, and representation. As a dialogic process, authoring considers not only how identities are enacted, but also the ways in which those identity enactments are recognized within social contexts. Agentic improvisations are necessarily dependent on cultural wealth that people draw upon in their actions. To conceptualize cultural wealth in this framework, I focus on the multiple cultural resources that people draw upon, which reflect their ways of knowing and being, social and familial networks, literacies, and languages.

As a form of cultural wealth, language is a dynamic location in agentic improvisations, as well as a potential carrier of change (Pennycook, 2010; Trinh, 2010). Patricia Hill Collins (2000) describes the process of rearticulation, which represents the expression of women's everyday experiences and knowledges through feminist theory, and particularly Black feminist thought. This process of rearticulation allows for affirmation of nondominant ways of knowing and being and through a process of naming, it can "stimulate resistance" (p. 36). Collins describes, "Naming daily life by applying language to everyday experience infuses it with the new meaning of a womanist consciousness. Naming becomes a way of transcending the limitations of intersecting oppressions" (p. 130). According to Canagarajah (2004), language creates opportunities to "resist, modify, or negotiate" ways in which dominant discourses serve to produce

people in particular ways. Thus, while language is linked with various historically situated forms of power, it also allows new possibilities for interacting with and through power. I rely on Bakhtin (1981) to better understand the situatedness of language:

> As a living, socio-ideological concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not after all out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!), but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own. (pp. 293-294)

Making a word "one's own," requires intention, creativity, and interpretation. Thus every engagement through language demonstrates a level of agency, as people use language to author the worlds around them, as well as themselves within those worlds. Echoing Bakhtin (1981), Canagarajah (2004) argues that there is no "authentic" agentic voice that is one's own; however, "we have to negotiate a position in the interstices of discourses and institutions to find our own niche that represents our values and interests favorably. This is how we construct a voice for ourselves" (p. 268).

It is important to note that the extent to which agency can have an impact depends on its recognition as such within Discourses (Gee, 2012; Lewis et al., 2009; Norton, 2010). Thus, from a critical sociocultural perspective of literacy, we need to be cognizant of the various ways in which power interacts with agency, and identity enactments, as well as the possibility that the intentions of agency and identity enactments are recognized in practices (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007). To conceptualize how girls are authored within and through various contextual discourses (Lewis & Moje, 2003), I also

turn to feminist postcolonial theory to add necessary critical depth. For example, I argue that a particular type of "refugee woman" is discursively produced in dominant discourses based on a deficit-oriented perception of her global social, political, and historical location, experience with persecution, and political status. This monolithic woman is often represented as weak, vulnerable, and insufficiently educated. Instead of focusing only on the challenges related to living in oppressive environments, feminist postcolonial theory illuminates the numerous strategies that women develop to survive under these conditions (Mohanty, 2003). Thus, it is important to disrupt homogenizing discourses, while recognizing the multiple ways in which they intersect with identity enactments and agency in the authoring processes.

Gayatri Spivak engages with the issues of agency and voice in her seminal 1988 essay, asking *Can the Subaltern Speak?* She focuses on the particular experiences of "subaltern" women, who live and work on the "other side of the labor division" to illustrate the heterogeneity of the Indian society, along with the economic oppression that exists in the social hierarchy of this socioeconomic diversity. However, she also uses an example of *sati*, a historical practice of widow immolation in India to illustrate how gender in particular intersects with power to ensure that women cannot speak, no matter their economic circumstances. The silencing that resulted from this practice was twofold: While actual silencing of women took place through physical death, it was followed with discursive silencing that resulted from the social and colonial debates surrounding the practice. The debates were centered in the British colonial perspectives, which sought to limit the freedoms of the entire population, while seeking to "save" the women from the practices imposed by Indian men. Thus, Spivak writes: "Between patriarchy and

imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third-world woman' caught between tradition and modernization" (p. 102). As a consequence, she notes, "The subaltern as female cannot be heard or read" (p. 104)

Scholars, such as Raka Shome, Radha Hegde (2002) and Ania Loomba (2005) caution against literal interpretation of the statement that subaltern women cannot speak. If we argue that the subaltern *can* speak, we have to question to what extent are the realities of oppression and violence minimized? On the other hand how do we conceptualize their agency and survival? Loomba (2005) encourages us to consider the conceptual space between these positions, recognizing the violence that does exist, with all forms of interconnecting oppressions, including those based on gender and class, while considering the historical location and leaving possibilities for flexible understandings of voice, speaking, and agency. What agency and voice mean, then will vary, depending on the context, or the particular Discourse in which it takes place. For example, Loomba illustrates that a widow who speaks about sati without critiquing it, by just offering facts about what it is, is not rebelling against it with *what* she says. However, the fact that she is saying something, and is alive, can be seen as a rebellion in itself.

In this section I have outlined the spatial contexts of authoring processes, illustrating how translocality is conceptualized in the critical sociocultural theory of literacy framework. I have also outlined the conceptualization of the authoring process – a dialogic negotiation of identity, agency, and power in a space of authoring. As outlined

in this framework, the key elements of this process include identity and agency enactments, which rely on improvisations that draw upon cultural wealth to respond to discursive colonialism and positioning within dominant discourses.

Critical sociocultural theory of literacy and this study

The critical sociocultural theory used in this study illustrates how discursive practices colonize women and girls, many of whom live, move through, or resettle in locations that have been physically and discursively colonized (Hegde, 1998; Loomba, 2005; Spivak, 1988). Through this colonizing process, which is highly intertwined with patriarchy, women are presented as a monolith, poor, weak, and in need of saving. I argue that representations of refugee women are particularly aligned with these negative representations, where refugee women and girls are discursively positioned in narrow and deficit-oriented ways as weak, insufficiently educated, and poor (in terms of lacking material resources, as well as worthy of pity). The purpose of this dissertation study was not to deny the oppressions many women and girls who are resettled as refugees endure and survive, but to recognize these various forms of material oppression, with a specific attention to how gender intersects with race, ethnicity, age, religion, SES, nationality, as well as time and space (Hegde, 1998). This study contributes to the literature that disrupts how many women are discursively colonized and represented in academic literature by engaging with the complex processes through which some young women who were resettled as refugees in the United States enact their identities and agency through literacy practices to disrupt those constructions. I focus on the ways in which the girls in this study perform agency and enact identities during the authoring process through

multimodal literacy practices. These dynamic forms of literacy often take place in Discourses in digital settings (Gee, 2000).

To gain a deeper understanding of how young refugee women author themselves following resettlement, I collected ethnographic data from late January through September 2013 at the Mya Community Center. The Center provided after-school educational programming for youth and their families who were resettled as refugees, including access to educational and enrichment programming, as well as technology. I was a volunteer in this after-school program from October 2009 – May 2014, working primarily with secondary school students.

The participants in this study included nine girls who were resettled as refugees from the Thailand-Burma border, where they were refugees from Burma, and the Karen State in Burma. There are many refugees who live along the border, most living in one of the nine camps set up for those who were forced to flee Burma and its states. The camps were meant to be temporary and are run by the Thai government. However, because people living in the camps are unable to return home due to fear of continued persecution, they remain in the camps for extended periods of time (decades or longer). The camps do not provide access to Thai education for youth nor employment for adults. In addition, refugees who live in the camps are unable to leave and move freely through Thailand. The girls in this study were resettled to the United State from either the Umphiem or Mae La camps, with the exception of Than Moe Aye, who did not identify where she lived in Thailand.

To address the main questions guiding this research, I engaged in ethnographic research that allowed a more extensive engagement to develop a deeper understanding of

authoring processes that were taking place through multimodal literacy practices. In addition to providing a depth of understanding of the meaning-making process in particular social contexts, and in this case, as it pertains to the identity authoring processes through multimodal literacy practices, the ethnographic approach allowed for an engagement with macrolevel social, political, and historical contexts.

As part of my ongoing involvement at the Center, I transitioned from a volunteer to a participant observer in the after-school program. Following a month of general participant observation in the secondary after school program, nine girls were selected as participants, based on their self-identification as female, resettled as a refugee, and having basic communication skills in English. Focusing on secondary school-aged students allowed me to engage with students who have had greater opportunities to interact with multiple social and educational contexts prior, during, and following migration. In addition to participant observation field notes, the primary sources of data also included transcripts of semistructured interviews; transcripts and screen recodings of multimodal interviews; documents, including screenshots and URLs of images, videos, and other multimedia files (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Emerson et al., 2011; Fontana & Frey, 2008).

Data analysis and interpretation were guided by the critical sociocultural theory of literacy framework. This framework brings together critical perspectives on multimodal literacy practices, identity authoring processes, and translocality. It provides critical tools for understanding how girls who were resettled as refugees negotiate their identities translocally through multimodal literacy practices. This framework draws on sociocultural perspectives on multimodal literacy practices, along with critical

perspectives from postcolonial feminist theory, postmodern geography, and cultural studies, focusing on the ways in which social, spatial, political, and historical contexts intersect with the identity authoring processes in multimodal literacy practices. This theoretical framework focuses on human action as socially situated and practiced, drawing specifically on New Literacy Studies and multimodality perspectives on literacy practices. In addition, it illustrates the complex ways in which identity, agency, and power intersect in the authoring process, which takes place in metaphorical spaces, such as "Big D" Discourses (Gee, 2012) and spaces of authoring (Holland et al., 1998). It also illustrates the ways in which these processes intersect with physical and imagined spaces through translocality. Lastly, the framework provides critical tools to examine how power functions to produce girls who are resettled as refugees as well as how they enact agency and power through multimodal literacy practices to challenge these productions in their identity authoring processes.

As the girls' authoring processes were situated in sociocultural frames, including contexts and social networks, and were carried out through cultural and linguistic resources and technologies, I began the data analysis by focusing on these framings. As Chapters 4 and 5 illustrate, the girls' authoring processes were situated in complex spatial histories of Burma and the Karen state, as well as experiences in Thailand, which were defined by lack of movement, financial resources, and opportunities for Thai education and employment. These experiences also include joy and fun, and constitute childhood experiences for all of the girls, which were dialogically constructed with friends and family. Following resettlement, the girls experienced a production of new cultures that merged their previous experiences in Thailand, with their experiences in the United

States – reflecting situatedness in their community contexts, schools, and dominant marginalizing discourses. The girls used technology along with their cultural and linguistic tools to produce translocal spaces in digital settings that allowed them to negotiate and hybridize their experiences and knowledges across global localities. It was in these spaces where they engaged in an authoring process – and specifically a digital authoring process, where they enacted identities shaped by their translocal experiences and cultural wealth. These included, broadly, identifying as translocal, multilingual, students, experts, and girls. Within these broad identifications, all enacted different conceptualizations of what it meant for them to be, for example, multilingual, or a girl, based on their cultural wealth resources.

Significance

Forced migration and its associated factors are undoubtedly traumatizing and it is important to understand and support women and girls who resettled as refugees who are coping with challenging experiences, such as trauma that results from experiencing or witnessing violence, loss, and displacement. The aim of this study then is not to minimize the range of traumatic and difficult experiences that refugee women face, but to engage with additional perspectives on the complexities of the refugee experience. Thus, we need to acknowledge the presence of cultural wealth that women and girls draw upon to survive under challenging conditions. Scholarly positioning of resettled women as primarily victims, with minimal engagement of their own socially, politically, and historically situated voices that express their own understanding of their experience and their selves, does not fully acknowledge ways in which they cope with difficult

situations. Thus it is important to begin to problematize the ways in which refugee women's cultural wealth has been minimized if not completely excluded.

Although scholars are beginning to disrupt the tendency within the refugee education field to speak for refugees and resettled women in particular, there remain limited studies that focus on how resettled women negotiate and express who they are in the authoring process. This research contributes to the development of the refugee education field by highlighting the agency of refugee girls as they negotiate their identities, and voice and enact them through multimodal literacy practices on a daily basis, broadening the current academic research representations of what it means to be a refugee in the US. In addition, understanding in greater depth the authoring process and identity negotiation based on a diversity of cultural and linguistic resources through multiple forms of literacy will to develop educational strategies for refugee youth, which affirm, value, and nurture translocal identities.

While my dissertation research contributes to the refugee education field by centering resettled girls' voices that express how they negotiate their identities multimodally, reflecting their cultural wealth, it also contributes to the field of literacy as a social practice. In particular, it adds to the growing understanding of language and literacy practices as global, as well as local, by offering a perspective on how newly resettled girls learn, use, and develop their multimodal literacy practices and engage with digital translocal social spaces. This also contributes to broadening the prevailing literature on digital multimodality that focuses on socially and economically privileged youth who traditionally have greater access to digital media and multimodal literacy practices and build on the emerging literature that focuses on the experiences of diverse

youth (Sánchez & Salazar, 2012; Warschauer, 2009).

Summary

In this chapter I provided an overview of this dissertation study and the critical sociocultural theory of literacy that grounds this research, illustrating the need to better understand resettled young women's authoring processes through multimodal literacy practices. In the following chapter I provide an overview of the literature that situates my study within the range of existing research that focuses on refugee education, identity negotiation authoring processes, and multimodal literacy practices in translocal spaces, illustrating themes as well as gaps in research. In Chapter 3, I explain in greater detail the methodology guiding this project, including an overview of the research approach, data generation, analysis processes, and ethical considerations guiding the methodological process. Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the sociocultural framings of the study, focusing specifically on the contexts, social networks, and tools that impacted the girls' authoring processes. Chapter 6 provides examples of some of the authoring processes that took place, while Chapter 7 illustrates the educational implications for literacy educators.

CHAPTER 2

REFUGEE EXPERIENCES, REPRESENTATION, AND EDUCATION

> *Instead of framing our students' lives by preordained categories of deficit, we might listen to the theories they have themselves developed by reflecting on the concrete realities of their own lives* (Campano, 2007, p. 59).

Migration, travel, and other forms of physical and virtual movements are central characteristics of contemporary youth experiences (Bucholtz & Skapoulli, 2009; Dolby & Rizvi, 2008). These active movements are reflected in the ways that youth author themselves in translocal contexts, and are particularly complicated for those who were forcibly displaced as well as those who were resettled as refugees in countries such as the United States. For those who have experienced geographic movements due to forcible displacement, the notion of "home" and belonging extends across multiple spaces (Brah, 2003; Dolby & Rizvi, 2008).

Forcible migration from one's home is often followed by prolonged displacement, which for a large percentage of the refugee population represents living in temporary homes in refugee camps, such as the overcrowded camps in Daabad, Kenya that house nearly half a million people, despite their 90,000-person capacity. Although the goal of international organizations, such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, is to provide temporary protection and ultimately facilitate return to their home countries,

many people live for years, or even decades, in protracted displacement situations. This further complicates the notion of home and belonging to a particular space, and thus the concept of translocality as outlined in the critical sociocultural theory of literacy which grounds this study is useful. For example, although a child's parents may be from Burma, the child was born and raised in a camp in Thailand, before the family was resettled in the United States. In her American school she is perceived as a refugee, a quiet girl, an English learner. Yet she is Burmese, and Thai, and on her way to becoming an American citizen. She uses Karen, Burmese, Thai, and English to interact in a variety of ways in and out of school. She thus draws on a broad range of cultural wealth to negotiate her identities in the authoring process, which often takes place through multimodal literacy practices in this translocal space.

In this chapter, I will provide an overview of the literature in which this study is situated. I will begin with an overview of the refugee population, before engaging with the literature in refugee studies with a particular focus on refugee education. In that section, I will illustrate that forcibly displaced people and particularly women and girls are often represented as victims in academic literature, without an engagement with their own tellings of their experiences. While those studies highlight important concerns, such as for example in the literature on trauma and negative experiences in education, they need to be contextualized within a broader perspective of the refugee experience that reflects not only challenges but also the cultural wealth that is necessary to overcome a range of difficulties. I will then discuss the emerging literature on the women's strengths and other elements of cultural wealth, followed by literature that addresses identity negotiation in authoring processes to which this study seeks to contribute. I will

conclude with a discussion that brings together authoring processes with multimodal literacy practices in translocal spaces.

Meaning of refugee status

Each year, millions of people are forcibly displaced from their homes due to war, conflict, or other forms of persecution. In 2009, 43.3 million people around the globe were forced to leave their homes, of whom 15.2 million are classified as refugees. Typically, refugee status is granted to a person

> …who is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution. (UNHCR, 2007, p. 6)

Refugee status differs from that of internally displaced persons (IDPs; 27.1 million), who are fleeing persecution but have not crossed international borders, and asylum seekers (~1 million), who have left their countries and are in the process of seeking protection.

According to UNHCR (2010), the largest percentage of refugees in 2009 (25%) were from Afghanistan. The second and third largest groups were from Iraq (1.8 million) and Somalia (678,000). Women and children represented nearly 80% of all refugees in 2009, while overall, women and girls represent about half of all refugees. More than half of all refugees reside in urban areas, but 60% of refugees in Africa reside in camps. Those who are able to obtain refugee status qualify for legal and social protection and support in many countries.

Specifically relevant to this study is the refugee resettlement context of the Thailand/Burma border. Along this border, there are nine refugee camps, which were intended as temporary shelters for people fleeing Burma due to persecution (Figure 2). Mae La was the first camp to be established in 1984 and is the largest in 2015. Other camps were established following Mae La and include: Umphiem (est. 1999), Nu Po (est. 1997), Ban Don Yang (est. 1997), Tham Hin (est. 1997), Ban Mai Nai Soi (est. 1996), Ban Mae Surin (est. 1996), Mae La Oon (est. 1998), and Mae Ra Ma Luang (est. 1995). The camps' population is predominantly Karen and Karenni, with a smaller percentage of Burmese, Mon, and Chin people who are persecuted by the Burmese government. In 2012, there were more than 80,000 people living in these camps who were registered as refugees, along with an estimated 60,000 unregistered residents (UNHCRa, 2013).

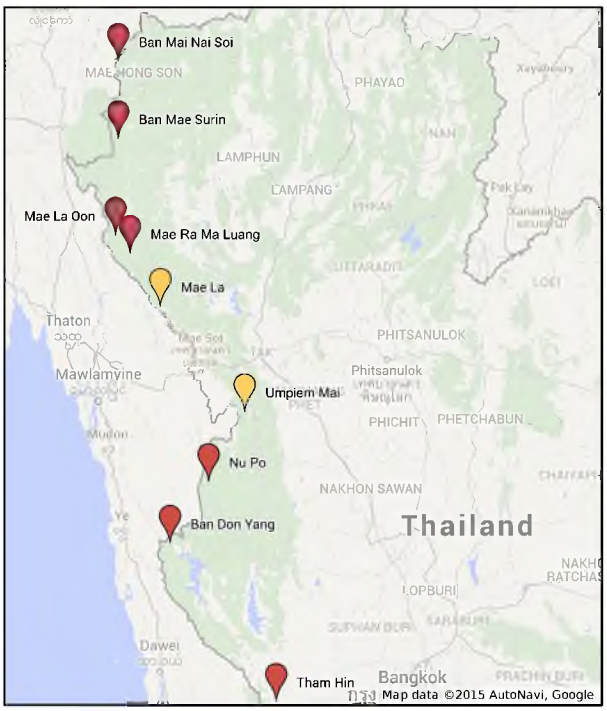

Figure 2: Map of refugee camps in Thailand (Map data © 2015 AutoNavi, Google)

The camps were established and are overseen by the Thai government, which set the rules and restrictions for people who live there. There are many limitations on what camp residents are able to do, including a 9 p.m. curfew, no legal right to employment, and restrictions on movement outside of the camp boundaries, which are enforced by Thai military and guards (Vogler, 2006; UNHCRa, 2013). Most of the residents do not leave the camp confines, due to needing special permissions. Because residents are unable to seek and secure employment, they must rely on resources that are provided to them by the Thai government, NGOs, and UNHCR. These resources include protection, education, as well as material things that meet basic needs, such as hygiene. NGOs also provide basics, like blankets and floor nets, although not enough for all residents (Vogler, 2006). Unfortunately, these resources are limited and ever decreasing, which has a significant impact on the livelihood of people living in camps, and particularly those who are struggling financially.

Access to financial resources is a major concern for many people living in the camps, and particularly those who have limited access to resources outside of the camp. Wealthier residents, who may also receive support from families or other sources, have more access, such as better quality blankets that they purchase or barter for. However, poor families often resort to trading blankets they receive as support for food or other items they may need, which leaves them more vulnerable. Additionally, wealthier families may have access to generators, while most residents do not have access to power. They are then able to charge money for others to use resources that rely on generators, such as electricity or lighting (40 baht), watching movies (2-3 baht depending on language), or karaoke. This in turn provides additional income to the wealthy families.

Some residents risk their safety and seek ways to earn money by leaving the camps overnight – passing by the security check-points or using alternate routes through the forest.

As camps are designed to provide a temporary shelter for inhabitants (UNHCR, 2013b), the building materials provided by the Thai government and NGOs are intentionally degradable to discourage permanent settling. Residents are not allowed to gather their own materials, so they must use bamboo for construction and leaves for roofing, which deteriorate quickly and need to be replaced every 2 years (Vogler, 2006). This presents a challenge for many of the refugees living in the camps because they are unable to return to their homes due to fear of continued persecution for years and even decades and thus must always work on repairing their housing.

While most refugees settle in camps or urban areas in close proximity to their country of origin, UNCHR recommends resettlement for refugees "…who cannot go home or who are unwilling to do so because they will face continued persecution, and whose life, liberty, safety, health or other fundamental human rights are at risk in their country of asylum" (UNCHR, 2010, p. 11). In 2009, less than 1% of the world's refugees were resettled. Because they are unable to return to their homes, many of the people living in the camps along the Thailand/Burma border qualify for resettlement, after applying.

Each year, the United States sets a "ceiling" that limits the number of refugees that will be accepted for resettlement. For fiscal year 2011, the ceiling is 80,000 people (United States Department of State, United States Department of Homeland Security, and United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2010). The United States is

most likely to approve refugee status for those refugees recommended for resettlement. Alternatively, refugees can apply for asylum status, but those requests are frequently rejected.

Refugees who resettle in the United States occupy a unique position among members of the broader immigrant population. While many immigrants plan and prepare to move to another country, refugees and asylum seekers move forcibly and often without control over their destination (Mosselson, 2006; M. Suárez-Orozco & C. Suárez-Orozco, 2001). In the forcible migration process, most refugees experience loss at varying degrees. This often includes loss of personal, social, and physical connections, including family, community, home, work, education, country, food, and language (Baker, 1983; Bolloten & Spafford, 1998; Dachyshyn, 2008; Mosselson, 2006). Consequently, many refugees have experienced varying degrees of trauma, such as posttraumatic stress disorder, a concern that permeates academic literature on refugee experiences and education.

While it is important to recognize that, much like loss, trauma is a central experience that many displaced persons share at varying degrees, the overwhelming focus on trauma undermines the individuals' cultural wealth that is necessary for overcoming traumatic situations. Thus, I draw on a critical sociocultural theory of literacy in this dissertation study to illustrate how several girls resettled as refugees negotiated their identities through authoring processes in translocal contexts to highlight that their lives consist of a broad range of experiences that may include, but also extend beyond trauma and loss.

Refugee representation

Academic literature that focuses on experiences of refugee youth and families often highlights the negative experiences that they may have experienced prior to migration. For example, these experiences may include loss of family members, violence, and trauma that may ensue as a result. In this section I provide an overview of the themes that center around trauma, while pointing out the lack of students' and their family's voices and perspectives on their own experiences. In particular, I review the literature that highlights women's cultural wealth and expressions of their experiences based on that wealth.. These perspectives are necessary in order to understand how students are coping with their experiences and ultimately enacting their cultural wealth in authoring processes.

Displacement

One of the central experiences of forced migration is displacement, which can be represented as "the loss of attachment to a physical place and the additional stress placed on individuals by the increased demands that result from having to orient the self in an unfamiliar space" (Anderson, Hamilton, Moore, Loewen, & Frater-Mathieson, 2003, p. 6). While refugees are a heterogeneous group, they have all experienced varying degrees of loss (Bolloten & Spafford, 1998). These may include a loss of family, community, and social networks which need to be rebuilt as part of the postmigration process (Dachyshyn, 2008; Mosselson, 2006), as well as a loss of connection to one's home, work, education, country, food, and language (Bolloten & Spafford, 1998). Consequently, many experience isolation and loneliness (Dachyshyn, 2008), and as

Gloria Myer, an Arabic teacher from Sudan indicates, feeling as "a guest in another person's house" (Li, 2008a, p. 118).

The process of displacement has a tremendous impact on individuals who are forced to have this experience. In particular, displacement and the factors that surround it, impact the lives of youth who live through such experiences, which may result in various forms and degrees of trauma, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Trauma

As Campano (2007) notes, "Often, immigrant, migrant, and refugee children bear witness to their parents, as well as their own suffering. It is difficult to isolate hardship in any individual psyche; it spills, so to speak, onto the fabric of the diaspora" (p. 56). However, while many children experience traumatic events prior to migration (Adams & Kirova, 2006; Anderson et al., 2003; Mosselson, 2006), we need to consider that some may not have had those experiences and that others have experienced trauma to various degrees (Jones & Rutter, 1998).

While many children are targets of warfare, and consequently may suffer from depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Yule, 1998), not all children will exhibit traumatic symptoms equally. Given similar experiences, some children will cope better than others. Many will "cope and function well in the classroom, make stable friendships and progress in their learning" (Bolloten & Spafford, 1998, p. 111). Thus it is crucial to identify children who are struggling following resettlement and ensure that their needs are met (Jones & Rutter, 1998). Unfortunately, as there has not been much research that highlights refugee youth's voices and their expression of their experiences,

research has focused on adults' interpretations of children's experiences. In fact, only recently has PTSD been identified as a disorder that can impact children (Yule, 1998). Consequently, we know little about how youth who have been resettled as refugees in the United States cope with difficult experiences, and identify needs that would help support them in their coping process. Taking into account students voices provides opportunities to engage each young person individually and not as part of a group, given the diversity of youth's backgrounds and experiences (Anderson et al., 2003).

While trauma is an important concern, its representation in refugee literature with limited engagement with resettled youth's perspective on it is concerning. Some research on refugees views trauma as a weakness and a problem *with* refugee students and families that needs immediate intervention. The discussion is approached from the mental health perspective (Anderson et al., 2003) where psychological factors are seen as problems, while refugee children are seen as vulnerable victims. For example, DeCapua, Smathers, and Tang (2009) write that many resettled students "face psychological *problems* as a result of having been transplanted from the familiar people, language, and surroundings in their home country to a new environment and a new language" (p. 33, emphasis added). Or, as Loewen (2004) writes, "Refugees are more at risk for mental health and academic dysfunction, and they do not arrive in optimal psychological or emotional condition for language learning" (p. 36). These perspectives homogenize refugee experiences. They also do not engage with students who have been resettled as refugees, nor do they reflect the range of possible traumatic, as well as resilient and coping experiences that draw on the students' cultural wealth.

Gender

Focus and attention to gender in refugee studies is underdeveloped. In a review of articles published in the *Journal of Refugee Studies* less than 10% of articles engaged with issues of women, gender, or feminism over the course of 20 years (Hyndman, 2010). Although I have not conducted a formal review of articles that focus on refugee education, I have noticed a similar trend. Moreover, when women are discussed, they are often (though not always) represented as vulnerable and weak. In research they are often written about in conjunction with children, such as for example the numbers that reflect that nearly 80% of refugees are women and children (Yule, 1998; Williamson, 1998). This number obscures the fact that women and men represent nearly equal proportions of the refugee population. Moreover, the portrayal of women and children as victims without agency, voice, resistance, and various forms of cultural wealth in violent and oppressive situations is problematic.

Women and girls continue to be victims of particular types of oppression and violence. In refugee camps for example, women are raped, forced into marriage, and denied equitable education (Sinclair, 2001; Sommers, 2001; Williams, 2001). Although displaced men and boys also experience violence, it is typically not sexual. In addition, when formal educational resources are limited, they are typically reserved for male youth who are encouraged to get an education and postpone marriage. Moreover, men and boys' agency and voice are not masked and hidden in the literature, as for example in the much written about case of the "lost boys" of Sudan. While the metaphor "lost boys" implies a lack of agency, voice, and existence, the stories told in academic literature are

to the contrary. The boys are represented as strong, resilient, and surviving youth, a perspective rarely granted to women (Grabska, 2010).

These constructions reflect discursive colonization of women around the world (Hegde, 1998; Loomba, 2005; Mohanty, 2003). The frequent discursive colonization takes place through homogenizing representations of the so-called Third World Woman as "victimized, tradition bound, and passive" (Hegde, 1998, p. 281). In dominant discourses, this homogenized woman is represented in "universal, ahistorical splendor" (p. 41), as uneducated, incapable, and unaware of her depressed conditions (Mohanty, 2003). Disrupting this deficit oriented homogenization is important, to recognize heterogeneity in women's experiences, which is often reflective of the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, and political conditions (Loomba, 2005).

Grabska (2010) argues that an examination of gender in refugee literature is important and necessary. More specifically, she writes that we need to look at gender as a relational category: "Gender as a relational category reveals how gender hierarchies are embedded in social institutions and everyday practices that normalize and reproduce asymmetrical power relations between and among sexes" (p. 481). She is responding in particular to the impact that the generation of "lost boys" has on the refugee population in Kenya; as many of the boys are resettled in Western countries and are returning to the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya in order to purchase brides. The boys' experiences, life stories, and more stable and educated lives, have had an impact on reinforcing and increasing the patriarchal gender power relations in the camps. Thus, Grabska argues, there needs to be more research focus on refugee women's experiences and power

relations that are based on gender particularly in transnational contexts impacted by displacement and resettlement.

Refugee education

I like school, because you know, education goes everywhere you go.

~Sabina, 8, Bosnia (Mosselson, 2006, p. 100)

The literature that focuses on the educational experiences of students resettled as refugees tends to include some student voices and perspectives, though the majority of voices are those of the researchers, parents, and educators. As Sabina indicates above, amid a range of lost connections and resources, for students with refugee experiences, education can offer a form of stability (Bolloten & Spafford, 1998; Dachyshyn, 2008; Mosselson, 2006). Unfortunately educational experiences in formal educational institutions are not ideal. In this section, I discuss the literature that represents the negative educational contexts of refugee youth following resettlement. While this is important research, it is also lacking student voices and perspectives on their own experiences.

As schools are where refugee children begin to immerse in and experience their new contexts (Adams & Shambleu, 2006), it is important to further examine the context of refugee education. Nearly half of all refugees are children who, like adult refugees, arrive into a new context with unique perspectives and experiences. Unfortunately, depending on the country of origin, and ethnic, cultural, and linguistic background, students' context of reception will vary (Jones & Rutter, 1998; Pinson et al., 2010). However, as children, young refugees are often able to gain more rights than adult refugees even in varying contexts of reception (Pinson et al., 2010). For example, youth

typically gain access to education even in contexts that make it difficult to obtain refugee status based on the 1951 Convention, such as in the United Kingdom (Pinson et al., 2010). On the other hand, the quality of education varies and many studies have pointed to the challenges refugee students face in new educational contexts.

Upon arrival into a new country, "refugees do not fit into the tidy pattern of the school year that starts in September and ends the following July" (Jones & Rutter, 1998, p. 6). Thus, upon arriving to a new country, students need supportive educational environments that will take their prior education into consideration while developing meaningful individualized education plans. Unfortunately, this is often not the case as evident in examples that illustrate the negative context of reception students face in schools, but also in the examples of deficit-oriented discourses in the refugee education literature (DeCapua et al., 2009; Szente and Hoot, 2006).

Some scholars use language that furthers the distinction between newcomers such as those resettled as refugees, and the "host" country. For example, Szente and Hoot (2006) write, "…many refugee children find themselves in our schools" (p. 220) and have birth dates assigned according to "our calendar" (p. 223). Language that assumes that there are two distinct groups - "us" and "them" (the refugees) is deficit oriented and marginalizing, leaving one to wonder how can there be a positive learning environment if the school is conceptualized as "our" school where "they" happen to find themselves in?

Similarly, another discourse that permeates the literature is that many refugee students have experienced limited or interrupted schooling. Refugee students are resettled with varying levels of prior education, and some in fact do experience interruptions in their formal schooling, while others have more consistency in prior

education (DeCapua et al., 2009; Dooley, 2009; Williams, 2001). Typically, it is difficult to ascertain the amount of prior schooling particularly for children that resided in refugee camps before resettlement, given paucity of information about education of refugee students in these situations (Sinclair, 2001). In addition, the education programs in camps will differ in focus and quality as they are generally developed and run by the refugee communities (Brown, 2001). A problem with this discourse, however, is the presumption that formal education around the world resembles that in the United States and that missed grade levels would prevent students from engaging with material in their new schools following resettlement. The focus on interrupted schooling places the blame on the students' background seeing with interrupted schooling as arriving with an immediate disadvantage and lack of knowledge.

In order to provide guidance for teachers on how to work with students who have experienced limited or interrupted formal education (or "SLIFE" for short), DeCapua et al. (2009) have developed a book that addresses this topic. The authors identified SLIFE as students who face "challenges of developing basic literacy and numeracy skills and acquiring basic academic knowledge" (p. 3). Though they attempt to acknowledge that students come from diverse educational backgrounds and with a broad range of knowledges that should be "used as building blocks for acquisition of new academic knowledge," (p. 19) the authors make assumptions that students with interrupted schooling arrive with minimal preparation for being educated in the US classrooms. In their examples of the possible diversity of SLIFE, they comment on students' heavy accents, in addition to other measures of language proficiency. And while the authors do engage with students' voices by providing quotes, which mainly highlight that students

like school, their discussions are driven primarily from a teacher-based perspective. Student voices that highlight how they would like to be taught, or what their thoughts are on being identified as "SLIFE," for example, are missing.

DeCapua et al. (2009) also point to many SLIFE having limited or no literacy in their first language. Similarly, other scholars have drawn attention to this concern, as literacy in one language tends to support the development of literacy in additional languages (Hamilton, 2003; Loewen, 2004). However, the underlying assumption in the academic literature is that students lack a particular type of literacy, such as that required in US schools. In addition to illustrating the discursive colonization of youth resettled as refugees as lacking cultural wealth, this example also reflects the assumptions of what Street (2003; 2011) calls the autonomous model of literacy, which presumes that there is a universal type of literacy that people can (and should) acquire. All other types of literacy are seen as inferior or inadequate. On the other hand, the ideological model seeks to highlight the power that exists behind policies that determine what literacy needs to be taught, how, and to whom. Street (2011) argues that we need to take into consideration the meanings of locally-practiced literacies as defined by those who use them, instead of relying on a universal and highly political definition that reinscribe particular relations of power.

While some scholars tend to rely on deficit-oriented discourses in representing resettled students' educational contexts, other scholars do examine the students' educational contexts more critically. In particular, they show that schools are often underprepared to meet the needs of refugee students, often contributing to maintenance of

a negative context of reception, which includes institutionalized discrimination and racism.

Teacher un(der)preparedness

Refugee education scholars have shown that teachers are at times overwhelmed or fearful about working with refugee students, which may cause them to withdraw their support (Bolloten & Spafford, 1998). In addition, many teachers do not feel prepared to teach newcomer children, because they are not familiar with their backgrounds and knowledge systems (Adams & Kirova, 2006; Adams & Shambleu, 2006). However, while most teachers did not find their educational experiences provided them with sufficient preparation for teaching refugee students, they expressed that their practical classroom experiences were more meaningful and effective for their preparation (Adams & Shambleu, 2006). This indicates that it is prudent to ensure that preservice teachers have opportunities to engage with culturally and linguistically diverse students as part of their formal teacher education, such as through dialogic teacher research (Hones, 2002).

Without adequate preparation, teachers may hold deficit views of refugee students, based on the literature that focuses on issues such as interrupted schooling and other deficit-oriented perspectives that take place in dominant discourses. In her study of preschool refugee youth in Canada, Dachyshyn (2008) shows that teachers often blamed the families for students' outcomes in school. In her study, one of the parents comments, "The children are given assignments and the parents are expected to help even they are not educated. Then, if the children do not do well in school the parents are blamed which is not their fault" (p. 260). Another mother commented about her daughter's experience

in schools: "When she asks questions, she does not get answers, she does not get any attention" (p. 257). Similarly, Dooley (2009) shows that teachers in Australia held very low expectations of their students. They often assigned "busywork" as homework for their students because they did not think that the students were capable of more. Thus, most teachers in the Australian study did not take into consideration students' individual skills, indicating instead that students needed to learn the basics first, such as knowing "what study means" (p. 6). These examples illustrate situations in which the teachers did not recognize students' cultural wealth, and were fearful or overwhelmed, consequently withdrawing their support (Bolloten & Spafford, 1998).

Racism, discrimination, and tracking

Upon entering Western schools, many refugee students experience discrimination, racism, and prejudice from both peers and teachers. For example, one parent in Dachyshyn's (2008) study in Canadian schools indicated: "My daughter was told by one of the children at school, your mom is ugly and she is always dressing up like Halloween" (p. 257). Similarly, a Congolese 7-year-old student shows how the school was devaluing his linguistic resources. He noted, "When I started school, I met some people who speak Swahili, who have been living here for a long time. We started to play together. After a few days, a teacher told us that we could not speak Swahili, and we stopped talking to each other" (Dachyshyn, 2008, p. 259). Students in Li's (2008a) study also indicated that teachers discriminated against them, by for example, strictly enforcing rules like gum chewing among African students and not enforcing them among white students.

Pinson et al. (2010) indicate that English was seen as key to making friendships and diminishing bullying. However, research on refugee students' experiences shows that students are often placed in subtractive English as a Second Language courses that limit the students' access to the curriculum (Jones & Rutter, 1998). In a study of Sudanese refugees in a Midwestern city, Li (2008a) found that students were often placed into pull-out ESL programs. While schools try to meet the students' linguistic needs, they are often limiting the students' access to the mainstream curriculum in order to provide language support services by pulling students out of the classroom (Jones & Rutter, 1998). In addition, by limiting "refugee children's opportunities to interact with other children in class, educators are denying them a point of contact with the target language group" (Loewen, 2004, p. 44). This was evident in the case of the Torkeri family in Li's (2008a; 2008b) study. For example, one of the boys felt that ESL was helpful initially, but that it was not necessary after a couple of years. Li (2008a) writes, "He did not like being pulled out, because he missed 'being there' with his regular classmates" (p. 109). In addition, his brother Owen Torkeri, who was in the 11th grade, was being pulled out of his courses without having the opportunity to make up what he missed. He was also placed on a lower level track, and thus not allowed to take certain content courses, like geometry. His mother was terribly concerned: "They say that he is not going to take geometry because of ESL. So I worry much. I think, why? Geometry is most important" (p. 244). She also indicates that she received a communication from the school noting that Owen needed to take 39 hours of ESL. Owen's brother, Fred, needed to take summer courses in order to make up the content he missed as a result of being pulled-out for ESL. When the Torkeri mother sought to work with the school to change how her

children were receiving ESL instruction, she was told that there was not much the school could do given budget limitations.

Another Sudanese family in Li's (2008a) study, the Myers, expressed that language support services were often provided without knowledge of students' linguistic backgrounds (Li, 2008a). For example, the school would provide an Arabic translator for the Myer children who did not speak Arabic. The teachers and the school made the assumption that they spoke Arabic because they are Sudanese, but the children speak Dinka. Thus, it is important that language support services are planned and individualized in order to meet students' linguistic needs without limiting their participation and progress in content areas (Loewen, 2004). While these studies illustrated how students may face a negative or a deficit-oriented context in their new schools, apart from Dachyshyn, they generally lacked the students' perspective of these events. Thus, we know little about how the students experienced these negative contexts and how impacted their authoring processes in which identity, agency, and power intersect. In the following section, I discuss the literature that focuses on the students' strengths, such as their resilience and voice in the US educational context.

Voice and cultural wealth

While much of the literature does not include student voices and perspectives on their educational experience, perhaps due in part to a limited use of feminist methodologies in this research area, there are some scholars that are beginning to respond to the lack of students' voices by engaging with students' voiced or silent perspectives (e.g., Campano, 2007, Mosselson, 2006, Oikonomidoy, 2009). In addition, refugee

education literature does engage students' parents in order to provide a critique of the educational system, but also to show the cultural wealth that families draw upon following resettlement. In this section I provide an overview of the literature that highlights refugee families' agency, after I provide an overview of studies that focus on elements of refugee cultural wealth. This perspective is important because it counters the overrepresentation of refugees as victims.

Resilience

One of the primary elements of refugee cultural wealth discussed in the literature focuses on resilience, which Yosso (2005) considers to be an element of navigational capital. The literature on resilience is mostly theoretical, though some recent qualitative studies are beginning to illustrate this concept in refugee communities around the world. Resilience, according to Sossou, Craig, Ogren, and Schnak (2008) is "tied to the ability to learn to live with ongoing fear and uncertainty, such as the ability to show positive adaptation in spite of significant life adversities and the ability to adapt to difficult and challenging life experiences" (p. 367). Anderson (2003) writes that resilience is an interactive process "in which both environment and personality play a part" (Anderson, 2003, p. 56). More specifically, research on resilience represents a "focus on strengths, existing resources and successful outcomes" of a person in particular contexts, which includes family and other social as well institutional support systems (Anderson et al., 2003, p. 6). In addition, according to Anderson, a person's physical and personal attributes, such as appearance or a sense of humor would have an impact on one's resilience. Unfortunately, however, a negative context of reception following resettlement

may put those attributes in question. For example, jokes are often difficult to translate and physical attractiveness is context dependant (see Dachyshyn, 2008, for example).

In their study of seven Bosnian refugee women, Sossou et al. (2008) highlight the resilience that refugee women possess, using selections from their own voices as support. They found that family connections and spirituality, which does not represent organized religion, were essential to this group of women, encouraging them to "keep strong and going daily, despite being uprooted from their country and their traumatic experiences as refugees" (p. 377). Although they approach the study from a social work perspective, focusing on trauma, the researchers highlight the importance of cultural competence among practitioners in order to identify resilience factors and develop support based on those factors.

Voices and silences

Although some scholars focus on the negative context of reception in schools, others broaden that critique by including examples of how those resettled as refugees draw on their resistant capital (Yosso, 2005) to enact their agency and work to resist negative circumstances. The studies focus mostly on family interactions and responses to negative schooling contexts, while some offer student perspectives.

The research indicates that parents are generally satisfied with the school system, however, there were particular characteristics of the children's schooling experiences that the parents would like to improve. For example, the parents in Li's (2008b) study were well aware of the racism and discrimination in schools, indicating that they need to ensure that their children work exceptionally hard to succeed. In addition, some parents

found schools to be "less rigorous than schools in their native country" (Li, 2008b, p. 242), as there is not enough homework and children have too much free time (Adams & Shambleu, 2006; Dooley, 2009; Li, 2008b; Mosselson, 2006). Lastly, parents expressed a desire for teachers to be more understanding and welcoming of their children's cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Adams & Shambleu, 2006; Bolloten & Spafford, 1998).

Much of literature that includes families' voices serves to dismantle stereotypes of culturally and linguistically diverse families and their involvement in children's education (Adams & Kirova, 2006; Dooley, 2009; Li, 2008a, 2008b; Mosselson, 2006). The research demonstrates that parents are highly involved in their children's learning and education, even if their involvement differs from Western norms of parental involvement typically expected in schools (Adams & Kirova, 2006). While refugee parents may not participate in bake sales or similar school activities, they spend time with their children at home working on assignments, even when they do not speak English. For example, one of the mothers in Mosselson's study indicates, "I didn't know any English. So I got a big dictionary and everyday when she came home from school I got a book and wrote down everything and tried to be translator" (Mosselson, 2006, p. 99). Similarly, Dooley (2009) found that despite not knowing English, the parents ensured that their middle school students completed their homework by creating comfortable spaces, freeing their time, and monitoring the children's work.

Using a Critical Race Theory perspective, Roy and Roxas (2011) examine how using refugee students' and their families' counterstories can illuminate and trouble teachers' deficit perspectives, with a goal to "make visible the ways in which these deficit practices can impede empowering praxis in the classroom" (p. 522). For example, they

focus on the teachers' beliefs that Somali students' family practices are inappropriate, that students are aggressive, and that they do not care about education. In response to these perspectives, Roy and Roxas (2011) bring in stories that show the parents' perspectives. For example, they include a story of one father who attended a school in Somalia as a young man. His father taught him Somali so that he could go to school, taking a risk by pretending that he was not Bantu, as Bantus were not allowed to get an education. His father took a life-threatening risk to ensure an education for his child. Another parent indicated:

> I know that education here [in the United States is important and that my children should do well in school. I just do not know exactly what that means here or if I can even help. My wife and I hardly were able to go to school in Somalia because they didn't want us there. That is why it is so hard for us to even help. (p. 533)

Roy and Roxas use stories like these to illustrate that Somali families not only care and value education, but that the educational opportunities for their children following resettlement provide a sense of hope and optimism in challenging times.

Mosselson (2006) and Campano (2007) engage with students in order to show how they negotiate negative educational contexts. In her study on female Bosnian refugees in New York, Mosselson found that "Education has a dual function for many of the refugees in this study: first, it provides a sense of control over their transience; second, the refugees can transform themselves from 'the foreigner' to the 'A student'" (Mosselson, 2006, p. 184). For example, one of the high school students, Nataša, found comfort in her high achieving status at school, because she felt that she was gaining a sense of control of her future, while having an easier time navigating school expectations and relationships. For example, she indicated that it was easier for teachers and students

to talk with her as a top student, because they did not know how to approach her when she was perceived as a refugee. However, Mosselson (2006) does not discuss how Bosnian students were perceived in school compared to students from different ethnic backgrounds. I presume that based on social constructions of race, it would be easier for Bosnian students to make the transition from a "foreigner" to top student than for refugee students from Africa or Asia.

Gerald Campano (2007) shows how students from different cultural backgrounds may struggle to transcend their "foreign-ness" in American schools. As they cope "… with issues such as poverty, memories of war and flight, the death of loved ones, the incarceration of family members, racism, and the ongoing challenges of crossing political borders and cultural boundaries" (Campano, 2007, p. 52), many refugee children in this teacher-researcher study demonstrated silence in school. It was through silence that they negotiated their past experiences with the present ones. Thus, silence can be strategically used as children evaluate their environments and find their own place within a new space. Unfortunately, Campano (2007) finds that silence in schools was not recognized as an element of cultural wealth; instead it was often perceived as a problem and "silent" children were viewed from a deficit perspective. In another study, Pinson et al. (2010) found that some students used silence as "a weapon of self-preservation" to resist their peers' derision (p. 148).

Similarly, Roxas (2011) finds that some of the Somali Bantu students in his study withdrew as a way to protect themselves from the negative environment in which the teachers were unprepared and consequently unsupportive. For example, one of the teachers did not care that a student was asleep in the classroom and would make no effort

to wake him up. The student contends that he sleeps because he actively chooses to do so. The teacher never attempted to engage him, wake him, or make a relevant connection between the course material and his life even when she had the opportunity to do so. The teacher argued that students did not care about school. Roxas shows that students withdraw, not because they don't care, but because they are trying to preserve their dignity:

> … these students do care but just are so overwhelmed by what is being asked of them that they begin to see withdrawal as the only 'safe way' out to protect their dignity. If they try and fail, then they will be seen as being dumb or stupid. If they chose to not even play the game as it has been set up, they have publicly made that choice themselves, and no one will ever know the exact extent to which they are totally lost and need additional support. (p. 536)

One way that schools can provide safe environments where students can transcend from "silence to voice" is through storytelling (Campano, 2007, p. 56). Although the previous studies illustrate how students draw on their cultural wealth to enact agency in relation to various systems of power, accounting for voice takes into consideration the identity negotiation process as part of the authoring process. In the following section, I illustrate how Campano (2007) and other scholars have engaged with students' voices in particular in order to highlight their perspectives on their experiences.

Refugee student identity negotiation

Scholars have recently begun exploring different identity enactments of students who have been resettled as refugees. Eleni Oikonomidoy (2009) conducted a study about academic identity formation of seven young women from Somalia who were attending a high school in a northwestern city in the US. In this process, Oikonomidoy finds that the

students in her study enacted their cultural identity as part of their academic identity. For example, the students provided advice to other newcomers, stressing that it is really important to stay true to one's self, which illustrates how students draw on their social and navigational capital (Yosso, 2005). One of the students, Asha, indicated "Just stick to what you are… And people, they will have no respect for you if you are trying to fit in. Being a different part of people makes you unique." (p. 30). This sense of belonging and sticking "to what you are" (p. 30) is a central element of the students' authoring processes, which includes their identity negotiation within academic settings in which translocal spaces are produced.

On the macro level, students' translocality also influenced their identity negotiation processes. As the young women negotiated their experiences across multiple global locations, including Somalia, Kenya, and the United States, their embodiments of cultural wealth gained through experiences across these locations influenced their authoring processes through translocality. In this translocal space, they developed a shared Somali identity, which was not reflective of their different ethnic backgrounds.

In addition to the development of a shared Somali identity, the translocal context had a great impact on the students' academic identity. Among all students, education was seen as empowering and liberating. The students reflected on their experiences with education prior to their resettlement in the US and found their opportunities for education were significantly increased given that education in the US is compulsory and free. This reflects Roxas and Roy's (2011) findings with the Somali Bantu families, who also found hope and optimism in education following resettlement, illustrating aspiration capital (Yosso, 2005). In addition, Oikonomidoy finds that the students in her study did not view

education as a solitary or individual endeavor. Instead, they displayed a desire to work together and "give-back" to their home and "[their] people" (p. 33), illustrating elements of social and familial capital (Yosso, 2005).

Literacy practices. Some scholars have begun to engage with students who have been resettled in Western contexts by examining their literacy practices, which include storytelling, along with reading and writing in and out of the formal classroom. Students "flourish when there is a space for them to investigate their own cultural inheritance and to use their own ways of meaning making" (McGinnis, 2007, p. 578). Thus, storytelling in particular has been found beneficial in engaging students to share their experiences and situate themselves in the new context, as well as better cope with and understand their previous experiences. Whittaker writes: "Refugee stories are to be processed, they say, through writing as a form of release and therapy" (Whittaker, 2006, p. 97).

Townsend and Fu (2001) illustrate the importance of needing to take into consideration students' needs and how those needs can be expressed through literacy practices. They focus on Paw, a young woman in an American high school who has spent 3 years in the country. Paw was not fully literate in her home language and learned to read and write while she was learning English in refugee camps. At the time of the study, Paw was very passionate about writing; she wrote in her journal, loved to read, and participated enthusiastically in the course assignments that allowed her to write about her experiences, thoughts, and culture. She noted: "That's the kind of writing I really like to do. I have a lot to tell and to say" (p. 107). She excelled in her ESL classes and was placed in a mainstream English classroom after 2 years. However, she quickly began to struggle in this classroom when the assignments began to incorporate higher-level,

decontextualized philosophical and literature concepts, such as transcendentalism, romanticism, and industrialization. She was unable to participate and engage at the level she wanted to and her teacher made minimal (if any) effort to assist her. For example, the authors quote the teacher:

> I could tell in class Paw couldn't understand me. And our reading didn't interest her either. One day when we watched the videotape of Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*, I saw that she had such a hard time. She turned her face aside and had a very bitter expression on her face. I didn't know what I should do. Should I ask her to leave the room or what? I just didn't know what I should do. (p. 107)

Later the teacher commented that Paw had set "unrealistic goals for herself" (p. 108), as she would not settle for a grade lower than an A. Eventually, Paw was reassigned to a remedial English class, in which she was not challenged and where she did not get an opportunity to further develop her literacy skills.

The authors show that the teachers did not make an effort to draw on Paw's cultural wealth to engage her understanding and writing about higher-level concepts. Even though the purpose of the article is to highlight the inadequacy of American classrooms to meet the needs of refugee students, the language used in the article is often problematic, as it places blame on the student for her unsatisfactory academic outcomes. They write:

> Because Paw was constrained by traditional Laotian cultural codes, including powerful forces of gender role expectations, she presented a demeanor that was silent and largely hidden. Because her spoken English was not well developed and she was quiet most of the day, her English teachers didn't know how to help her, didn't see her intelligence, and didn't understand that Paw had heartfelt academic ambitions. (p. 105)

It would have been more productive to provide examples of the ways in which teachers could have explored possibilities to meet Paw's needs.

In another study of refugee student's literacy practices, Sarroub et al. (2007) illustrate that motivation for learning is heightened when the circumstances reflect the person's interests and everyday experiences. The authors recommend that teachers do not get discouraged when teaching literacy in high school. Instead, they need to draw on the literacies that students already possess and make the instruction meaningful, while also making connections to other content areas.

In this case study, Sarroub et al. (2007) examined literacy practices of Hayder, a 17-year-old Kurdish refugee young man, in school, at home, and at work. The authors find that some of his teachers do not recognize his out of school literacy practices. For example, the teachers were unaware of his willingness and enthusiasm for literacy when he found it meaningful or useful. Hayder is motivated to learn the language outside of school, when it relates directly to his career prospects, interests, or everyday life, particularly in classes where teachers felt that he was not engaged. He often wrote down words so that he could remember them, read billboards, played videogames, and read manuals at work. His motivation for learning in school is minimal, as much of the school activities do not reflect his inner struggles, interests, or past experiences. On the other hand, the student responded positively to one teacher who was willing to engage him on a personal level. The authors do a good job portraying the challenges secondary school students may face in schools and they attempt to illustrate the impact of negative contexts on identity negotiation. However, they rely primarily on their own interpretation of the events, allowing only a couple of sentences from their field notes that represented Hayder's voice.

In another school-based study, Campano (2007) engaged in teacher research with a group of immigrant and refugee middle school students in a "second classroom" – a space where students were able to share their stories through speaking and writing. Working with immigrant students, some of whom were resettled as refugees, Campano (2007) was able to construct an environment that valued students' backgrounds. The students in this study created "survival stories" that highlighted their cultural wealth. For example, 10-year-old Ma-Lee from Laos and Thailand shows the importance of having a supportive school environment that values the students' backgrounds and experiences. Additionally, she expressed that she was often made fun of in school, but after participating in the second classroom, she learned that her "culture is the right way to be" (Campano, 2007, p. 67). This example illustrates the importance of ensuring that students are heard and that their cultural wealth is valued and viewed as a resource.

In addition, some have responded positively to reading others' stories that may reflect the struggles they have experienced. For example, Whittaker (2006) quotes Anysie from Rwanda who responded positively to reading a story about the Holocaust: "It taught me that even if you are the last member of your family to survive, to give up even if you want to die would be a betrayal of those that have been killed. It taught me too that I was not the first person to be hated because of my ethnic origins, and it showed me that other people have suffered more than me" (Whittaker, 2006, p. 94). Reading the story about the holocaust has encouraged Anysie to tell her own painful story of imprisonment and experiences with militia's brutality, so that it can help others.

These studies illustrate that scholars are beginning to engage with refugee youth's voices and their own perspectives on who they are. While some focus on literacy

practices, others like Oikonomidoy (2009) focus broadly on students' identities. Overall, this research points to the stories that the students desire to share about who they are following resettlement, and thus a need for a greater understanding of how students negotiate their identities through authoring processes. While these studies highlight the students' voices and at times aspects of their identities that are enacted through their literacy practices, they do not focus on the process of students' identity negotiation. Specifically, they do not illustrate the students' authoring processes that integrate dialogically identity enactments, agency, and power. In addition, they focus primarily on school contexts through conventional practices of reading and writing. Thus, looking at students' literacy practices, and particularly those that extend beyond school and traditional literacy contexts, would allow for a better understanding of the authoring processes. In the following section, I discuss studies that have focused on identity negotiation through multimodal literacy practices, illustrating the benefits that this perspective would bring to the refugee education literature. In particular, I focus on studies that take place in translocal contexts in which youth are able to negotiate and enact their identities.

Multimodal literacies in translocal contexts

> *We like to hear these stories about the past and how things used to be, about the vegetables, the lands, the environment. They say, the water from there tastes different in Palestine…. Everyone dreams of returning to Palestine… there are people from our village who went back and made film on video…. Everything was different there, the vegetables, the fruits… (Jordan, third generation, male)* (Chatty, 2010, p. 318).

As refugee students enroll in Western schools with diverse experiences and cultural wealth, it is important that schools support and value those experiences (Hyder,

1998). This entails providing opportunities for students to "be grounded in their first language and culture, to see being Somali, Kurdish or Vietnamese, for example, as something to be proud of" (Hyder, 1998, p. 99), by drawing on literacies and cultural wealth that students already possess (Adams & Shambleu, 2006; Jones & Rutter, 1998; Loewen, 2004; Sarroub, Pernicek, & Sweeney, 2007). For example, students can take part in "life story work" that allows students to share their backgrounds through storytelling (Bolloten & Spafford, 1998; Hyder, 1998). Thus literacy plays an important role in how students resettled as refugees negotiate their identities in their authoring processes in translocal contexts.

In recent years, scholars have explored how digital spaces offer possibilities for political action and identity negotiation in the lives of people with refugee and displacement experiences. Bernal (2006) shows how technology was used for political engagement through an Eritrean online community. She writes, "Eritrean websites have fostered the emergence of counter-publics and spaces of dissent where unofficial views are voiced and alternative knowledges are produced." (p. 176). Similarly, Brinkerhoff (2012) illustrated how members of the Tibetan diaspora used an online community called "TibetBoard" to voice their political opinions. These studies illustrate the affordances offered by online spaces for building of translocal communities as well as translocal identities through authoring processes.

While some scholars are beginning to explore the links between identity enactments and literacy practices among refugee students, the attention paid to identity negotiation in intersection with agency and power is often not the primary focus of the study. In addition, studies that do focus on refugee students' literacy practices are

typically centered on schools and conventional modes of reading and writing. As Gee (2000) indicates, youth have numerous opportunities to engage in literacy practices in and out of school. Today, those literacy practices are increasingly carried out in digital spaces (Mills, 2010). McCarthy (2009) points out that in current times, global movements of people and information have "separated culture from place" (p. 245). Thus, through technology, youth today can engage in interactions using multimodal literacy practices in spaces that create and are created by transnational cultures, movements, and complex identities.

Currently, there are several studies that illustrate the digitally mediated identity negotiation of youth in transnational spaces. Eva Lam in particular has been one of the leading scholars who write about the social contexts of language and multimodal literacies. She is especially interested in the way that technologies mediate literacy practices. For example, in her (2009a) case study, she writes about the use of instant messaging (IM) among immigrant youth who speak multiple languages. She found that a young woman who immigrated from China often communicated with peers from other Asian countries in English than native English speakers through IM: "I feel more comfortable talking to Asians…they won't laugh at me" (p. 385). In addition, she used a combination of standard English and African American Vernacular English. This literacy practice "had allowed her to position herself beyond the social peripheral status of a new immigrant and, according to Kaiyee, had enabled her to interact more easily with other teenagers at school" (p. 387). Thus she used a digital literacy practice to enact a particular identity among her school peers.

In another study, Lam (2009b) interviewed 35 students in a school that serves immigrant students predominantly. Here, she found that "they 'talked' to friends and family via instant messaging and e-mail, accessed news websites and internet portals based in different countries, participated in chatrooms that include visitors from other parts of the world and obtained movies, music and other resources for their hobbies on the net" (p. 171). These practices allowed students to maintain their home languages, learn English, and keep up with developments in slang in both English and their home languages. Thus, they used digital media for transnational purposes: "Maintenance and creation of transnational social ties through internet communication allowed the students to diversify their access to linguistic resources, especially those that are not easily available in their physical environments" (p. 183). While these studies illustrate elements of the authoring process, they do not do so in depth, as the purpose of the studies was to focus on the role of technology in literacy practices.

Similarly, Hawisher and Selfe, with Kisa and Ahmed (2009), illustrate how two students who are also co-authors of the article, Gorjana from Bosnia and Shafnaz from Bangladesh, use digital literacies in order to maintain their global networks. Gorjana communicates in various forms with her friends at home and other countries, choosing the type of communication tool to use (letter, email, video chat) depending on the audience, knowing what type of access people she is communicating will have. Shafnaz, who was raised in the UK and the US, negotiates her global identity through literacy, poetry writing, and videos using technology.

Transnational multimodal spaces are particularly important for girls with refugee experiences, as they enable the possibilities for (re)building social, cultural, linguistic

networks that may have been lost. These spaces also allow for identity negotiation and active voicing of the authoring process. Siddiquee and Kagan (2006) explored the impact of technology on six refugee women's experiences in the UK. The women were from different countries in Africa. Though technology, the women were able to rebuild some of networks that were impacted by displacement. In their online communication, many shared images and photographs, which was particularly helpful for those women who had lower literacy skills. Image sharing images enabled communication without the necessity for traditional reading and writing. The women also relied on technology to access information from their home countries, while also using it to support their transition to the new context. For example, they used technology to find housing, employment, and for career development. Through technology and multimodal literacies, the women enacted their agency and (re)built translocal social support networks.

One important element of studies that focus on translocal multimodal literacies is that they are often carried out in local contexts, while accessing or producing translocal spaces. It is in these spaces that "identities are tried out, embodied, and adapted in order to be made coherent" (Bucholtz & Skapoulli, 2009, p. 2). As youth move across linguistic, global, and semiotic spaces, they engage in translocal authoring processes. The present study focused on the process of students' authoring within these translocal spaces to gain a better understanding of the multiple ways in which young women resettled as refugees identify and express who they are. This study informs refugee education practice, in formal and community settings, by encouraging educators to "recognize flexible ways of belonging" within translocal contexts (Oikonomidoy 2009, p. 35).

Summary

In this chapter I provided an overview of the existing literature that engages the major themes of this study: experiences and cultural wealth of women resettled as refugees, as well as literacy practices, which include multimodal and digital practices in particular relation to authoring processes within translocal contexts. Although much of the previous literature focuses on challenges, such as trauma that results from violence and negative experiences in resettlement contexts, some scholars are beginning to write about the complexities of the refugee experience and consider some additional dimensions of this journey.

A review of research in refugee studies, and refugee education specifically, shows that refugees are often represented as traumatized victims of displacement, along with racism and discrimination following resettlement. Women in particular, when present in the literature, are often portrayed as especially vulnerable to trauma and physical and emotional victimization. While refugee women do in fact experience a range of experiences that may include traumatic events such as violence and loss, in addition to various forms of patriarchal oppression, there is little research that engages specifically with the women's perceptions of their experience. This may be due to a limited consideration of refugee women's issues from theoretical frameworks that draw on feminist perspectives.

As some scholars are beginning to engage with the identity negotiation of young women classified as refugees, they are showing that literacy practices represent a way through which young people express and voice who they are. However, as this literature continues to emerge, it is less cohesive. For example, while studies are beginning to

point to the ways in which students use literacy to enact their identities, in these cases identity tends be linked to ethnicity, culture, or national belonging, while additional dimensions of identity are not as salient. Moreover, the studies do not focus on identity negotiation in the authoring process, particularly in ways in which identities, agency and power intersect in this space dialogically. Lastly, the studies tend to separate literacy practices in school, out-of-school, and in after-school spaces, while generally focusing on traditional forms of literacy—reading and writing of text.

This dissertation study contributes to research in refugee education by focusing specifically on the link between literacy and girls' authoring processes in translocal spaces, while drawing on a critical sociocultural theory of literacy. In particular, I consider this authoring process including identity negotiation as dynamic and not solely linked to one's nation, home, or language. In this study, I engaged with the complexity of the girls' translocal spaces and how they navigated these spaces through literacy, considering the social, historical, and cultural influences. Thus, although this study took place in a particular community space, I recognized that multimodal digital literacy practices encompass a dynamic range of locations.

In the following chapter, I outline this study's methodology. There I describe the methodological approach, including the study context, my positionality, the methods for data collection and analysis process, and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

"Where are you from?" It's a complicated question for those who have been forced to leave their homes and resettle around the world as refugees. I am from Bosnia, which used to be in Yugoslavia; I grew up there. But I am also from Philadelphia, and now Salt Lake City. Asking the participants in this study where they are from also illustrated the complex relationships between home and displacement. All identified that they were from Thailand. Although they are from Thailand, their experiences are much more complex as most were born and raised in refugee camps at the Thailand/Burma border. Their parents are from Burma or the Karen State in Burma, and although they may speak a little Thai, they speak Karen or Burmese at home.

As Massey (2005) notes, spaces and places are not constructed by boundaries, which tend to be imposed physically, through walls or fences, but instead are constructed through various histories that come together at those particular locations. Identifying with a national space then does not mean identifying simply with a physical location, but histories, lived or imagined. The way we make sense of those histories, and produce them translocally, is through a meaning-making process that relies on language. Language intersects closely with those histories and is thus a very personal process and experience that is constantly evolving and shaping our experiences, identities, and understandings of

self. But what happens when these personal histories and the societal politics intersect in the authoring process that takes place through language and literacy practices in translocal spaces? And how do those identifications produce the spaces in which they take place?

In order to engage with some of these issues, I conducted a qualitative ethnographic study at the Mya Community Center to understand the authoring processes of nine teenage girls from Thailand. Relying on the critical sociocultural theory of literacy, I considered particular ideologies, as well as historical constructions and othering that are specific to the US context, as well as more locally in the Intermountain West. For example, how did the girls author themselves in light of the ways in which they were authored by others? How did their lived experiences across multiple physical, virtual, and imagined spaces intersect as they produced new translocal spaces through digital literacy practices? And how did technological affordances enable access to meaningful cultural and linguistic resources that mediated their authoring processes? To engage with these complexities on local and global levels, an ethnographic methods approach that draws on critical sociocultural theory of literacy was most productive. Although this approach allows for an in-depth engagement with the literacy practices that took place, it is itself located in complex histories of academic research, institutional power, and representation.

In this chapter, I outline the methodological framework for this study, including a detailed explanation of the study context, methods of data collection, the analysis process, and ethical considerations. Reflections on my positionality and historical locations are also included, as they significantly shape this study.

Ethnographic research and critical sociocultural theory of literacy

Ethnographic research is an interpretive process that typically involves a combination of methods, most commonly including participant observation and interviews, with the purpose of understanding how people make sense of particular practices, behaviors, or activities in everyday settings (Watson-Gegeo, 1988). Situated in the broader practice of ethnography, ethnographic research allows for engagement with the social, historical, and political locations in which the participants, the researcher, and the study are located. Traditionally, ethnography has been perceived as a "process and a product" of "making the familiar strange" (Heath & Street, 2008, p. 32). Watson-Gegeo (1988) indicate that it is typically developed upon principles that include looking at patterns in group behavior, taking into consideration the macro and micro contexts, and drawing on a theoretical framework with specified research questions. The theoretical framework is typically used to compare the meanings that are particular to the researcher with those that are particular to the cultural group studied. This element allows for some comparability with other studies "at a more abstract level" (p. 581), as no two studies will be alike.

The critical sociocultural theory of literacy in this study complements the ethnographic approach as it allows for an analysis of microlevel processes, such as the identity negotiation in authoring processes through multimodal literacy practices, as well as macro level power relationships that impact how identities are negotiated and enacted in these authoring processes. Due to its critical perspective, bridging the critical sociocultural theory of literacy with ethnographic methods allows for an engagement with locations of the researcher and an interrogation of power asymmetries that are

deepened through the research process. As Radha Hegde (1998) writes, "Research is an expression of our location in a world connected by lines of power and cultural asymmetry" (Hegde, 1998, p. 285). Power relationships in ethnographic research are reflected in the representation of a particular people by a person who is typically located in a different institutional and ideological context. Van Maanen (2011) writes, ethnography is a "peculiar practice of representing the social reality of others through the analysis of one's own experience in the world of these others" and as such, it is therefore "highly particular and hauntingly personal" (p. xiii). Researchers conducting ethnographies have not only institutional and social power that enables them to conduct research on people who may not have access to the similar institutional spaces, but they also have the power to represent them. Depending on the researcher's background, positionality, as well as institutional pressures or limitations, the consequences of the way that a group is represented to a broader audience will vary.

The challenge of ethnography is that it is itself grounded in a particular social, historical, and political context, in which researchers, who were historically anthropologists, would venture out to distant and unfamiliar spaces in order to observe the behaviors of "Others," studying, analyzing, and writing about them in a supposedly objective way. This was problematic because: "To render cultures as homogeneous and coherent is to mystify and erase the sociopolitical forces that constitute them" (Hegde, 1998, p. 283). Earlier ethnographers did not acknowledge the social and political histories of the spaces they entered, but they also did not acknowledge the ideological contexts in which they were themselves located (Marcus & Fischer, 1999). As Denzin and Lincoln (2008) point out, "qualitative research, in many if not all of its forms

(observation, participation, interviewing, ethnography), serves as a metaphor for colonial knowledge, for power, and for truth… Research provides the foundation for reports about and representations of 'the Other.' In the colonial context, research becomes an objective way of representing the dark-skinned Other to the white world" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 1). Culture, in these cases was a solid and static entity that could be learned, known, and described with accuracy. In addition to concerns about representation, it is also important to consider the issue of interpretation. Ethnographic data are initially interpreted by a researcher, who decides what gets included and excluded in order to represent the data in a way that will be meaningful to a particular audience. What is concerning is that the meaning is not fixed in writing, so the researcher's initial representation may not be interpreted as such by an audience. Thus, according to Van Maanen (2011), "Meanings are not permanently embedded by an author in the text at the moment of creation. They are woven from the symbolic capacity of a piece of writing and the social context of its reception" (p. 25). The audience then has the power to read, interpret, and draw conclusions about a particular representation of a cultural group.

However, at these multiple layers of representation and interpretation, months and even years after data collection, it is unlikely that the data represent truly the cultural processes and behaviors that were taking place. Britzman (2000) thus places accountability on the readers, indicating that "readers of ethnography must also be willing to construct more complicated reading practices that move them beyond the myth of literal representations and the deceptive promise that 'the real' is transparent, stable, and just like the representational" (p. 39).

In the past 3 decades, a scholar's ability to encapsulate and describe social realities has been explicitly questioned and scholars who engaged in ethnographic research began to move towards a perspective that recognizes the multiplicity and flexibility of culture (Marcus & Fischer, 1999). More hybrid perspectives, such as a sociocultural dialogic perspective, began to take hold in ethnographic research.

Situated in sociocultural perspectives, literacy scholars have moved towards ethnography because it allows for complex engagement with social practices within macro- and microlevel contexts. For example, two seminal ethnographies that helped shaped the field of New Literacy Studies include Shirley Brice Heath's (1983) *Ways with Words* and Brian Street's (1984) *Literacy in Theory and Practice*. Following nearly a decade of data collection, in her ethnography of communication, Heath highlighted in rich detail the social practices of reading, writing, and speaking in two working class communities in southern United States. Street's study focused on various literacy practices in Iran in the 1970s, noting that government policies naturalized some forms of literacy over others, which led him to develop the theory of literacy as *ideological* and not *autonomous*. More recent ethnographic work taking a critical sociocultural perspective on literacy accounts for the process of multimodality in literacy, while questioning presumptions developed in earlier studies (Pahl & Rowsell, 2006). For example, the notion of situatedness is complicated in recent studies, as they consider the creativity of multimodal literacy and its potential to create new spaces and new meanings through technology (i.e., Davies, 2006; Knobel & Lankshear, 2006).

The political implications of ethnographic scholarship are that it has at times served to legitimize constructions of homogeneity and thus reinforce the discursive

colonization of people who are marked as "other" (Mohanty, 2003). As I engaged with girls who are discursively constructed in particularly deficit-oriented and essentializing ways, I struggled with a methodological framework that has historically contributed to this essentialization. Combining ethnographic research with a critical sociocultural perspective on literacy that I have outlined for this study helps complicate the interpretations, while allowing for an engagement with various forms of power relationships. Instead of focusing on "group behavior," like some more traditional ethnographies, my goal was to look at practices that take place *in* social groups, with an assumption of variation and differing levels of enactments of and responses to power. Moreover, I further complicated the interpretations by highlighting political and historical contexts of various social practices to disrupt potentially homogenizing representations, and question my own position in relation to the study and the participants.

In this study, I focused on strengths and differences, while being cognizant that there are many ways in which this study could have been approached and interpreted and recognizing the powers that influence particular approaches and interpretations. By illustrating the differences, and recognizing that these enactments are time and location specific, the study sought to refuse the homogeneous constructions of women who are resettled as refugees in academic literature. Moreover, by drawing on women's own representations of who they are, as enacted through multimodal literacy practices, the study highlights the strengths and agencies of several young women resettled as refugees.

My goal was to engage in this "endlessly creative and interpretive" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 34) research process with a particular purpose of contributing to the literature that challenges the predominantly negative representations of refugee students.

I realize the danger of attempting to represent these students as they would represent themselves in this research-mediated context that takes place in a particular time and place. However, their expressions, in spite of being refracted through this research process, broaden as well as challenge the current representations in the academic literature that focuses on refugee youth.

In the following sections, I outline the study as well as the specific methods that were used to gather data on the key elements of this study, including the intersections of identity, agency, and power in the authoring process through multimodal literacy practices in translocal spaces. However, I begin by outlining my own positionality and my own historical relation to this study.

My "refuge, refugee, refuse" story

Trinh T. Minh-ha (2010) uses the phrase "refuge, refugee, refuse" to describe the experiences and complexities of displacement (p. 47). Like most people who leave their homes due to forcible displacement I fled Sarajevo, Bosnia, seeking *refuge* and relative safety in the early 1990s. When I left in late December 1993, I knew I may never return home, knowing that if I stayed, I may not have survived. Sarajevo was under siege, attacked daily by a range of artillery, while basic needs, such as food, water, and heat were barely, albeit very creatively, being met. After nearly 2 years of logistical difficulties, my mother and I were able to board a bus as part of a humanitarian convoy and head to Croatia, a neighboring country.

After arriving in Zagreb, Croatia, we filled out the necessary paperwork to file for *refugee* status. While this was a formal immigration category that would ultimately

enable us to resettle in the United States, this status marked our daily experiences for 5 months. Even though we looked similar and we spoke the same language as those in our "host" country, we were socially marked as refugees. Our accents pointed to our home locations and origins, our names indicated we were Muslim. We were not welcome and were often *refused*. We were refused services, items in stores if not pronounced "correctly," access to work, rights to human decency as we were "processed" in various health departments and social agencies, along with entry to various Western European countries. Ultimately, we were able to gain permission to resettle in the United States, where we moved in 1994.

The United States was a different historical context, which intersected the dynamics of time and space to shape our experiences. The legacies of centuries of political strife, imperialism, religious assimilation, resistance, survival, and transitions as we knew them were invisible in our new setting, which had its own particular histories in place. Very few people knew anything about us and people were curious, though overly sensitive about our experiences. "I cannot even imagine what you've been through," they would say. They were usually right. But then, the questions would follow, slowly, and loudly, so that we can understand them better: "Do you know what a microwave is?" "Do you have toothbrushes in Bosnia?" "Do you understand?" I smiled, nodded. As much as I wanted to respond, I remained silent, not wanting to offend or overstay my welcome. In order to minimize my refusal, I turned to silence.

Although I found tremendous comfort in not entertaining these curiosities, when I began 10th grade in September 1994, I still had an incredible story to tell. My opportunity came shortly in my English class, where our first assignment was to write

about a memorable experience. I chose to write about one of my most intense experiences under the siege, highlighting an unsuccessful attempt to escape my uncertain reality with my mother and her friend by running across the airport, the "no-man's land," with a paid guide. It was a tremendous story: it began with excitement and anticipation of freedom, before we started running through endless bullets and mortars, sliding and crawling through mud, seeking shelter in trenches, seeing people wounded and hurt, and then realizing that it was not our night even if there was a car waiting for us on the other, "free," side. So we ran again, this time back to where we came from, through the night streaked by tracer bullets, and into the shadows of tall residential buildings. And then, as we cleaned the mud from our bodies, together, in relative safety of a lower level apartment, the three of us laughed. For hours.

While I could have chosen a less-intense memorable experience, I realize now that I needed to tell this story at that time. I needed to share an example of what survival feels like, refusing, on my own terms, the multitude of Western media stories that portrayed Bosnian refugees as victims and not survivors. It was my survival story, one of many others, from my point of view, from my memory. I am grateful that my English teacher was supportive. She valued my experiences, encouraged me to build my English literacy based on those experiences, and enabled me to process, understand, and bridge my past with my new home, school, community, and language. No questions asked.

In the years that followed, the questioning lessened. The interest in my "experience" waned, as my white body transitioned from a refugee, to a poor, working class Eastern European immigrant, to a highly-educated, middle class American, with a slight, yet not easily identifiable accent. The privilege of my white body in America and

my invisibility is particular to the spatial constructions of various colliding stories and histories (Massey, 2005). Being a refugee in America is defined through those specific histories and discourses and based on notions of white superiority that carry particular legacies of colonization and imperialism. As a refugee in a white body, persecuted as a Muslim, although nonpracticing, I moved through American spaces with minimal refusal. I entered as a refugee, but did not remain one for long. The questions asked, the curiosity, and the brief spectacle of my refugeeness were hurtful, but temporary. Twenty years following my resettlement, to many, I am just a white, middle-class American (dream, come true), with a slight accent. Instead of curiously acknowledging "all that I've been through," more and more, people now ask me, "So, what made you move here?"

Yet, the memories of all that I've been through are strong and vivid. I nourish them through stories, graphic novels, movies, and other types of media. I relive them through sounds and silences. I find comfort and inspiration in scholarly writing, such as that of Trinh (2010), who for example describes her uneasiness and waiting for something terrible to happen in the dark of American nights filled with peace and constant silence. I read, and I remember. My memories are a part of me, my meaning-making, my writing and reading, and my learning. While I recognize the impact of my personal experience, I also negotiate my memories and my past experiences with privileges, personal growth, change, and the positions I've held over the past years as I developed my scholarly and research goals, including this dissertation study at the Mya Community Center. While the students at the Center have experiences and identities that are distinctly different from my own, we do share some particularities of the refugee experience—a complex process impacted by interruptions, loss, resettlement, and

survival. In the US context however, our experiences are shaped by differing degrees of refusal and associated discursive constructions of *otherness*, which are produced by the language of undevelopment, illiteracy, and insufficient knowing, especially for women deemed non-white and resettling from the "Third World."

As these constructions take place in academic discourses, my challenge in this dissertation work was to engage with the young women's own productions of who they are as enacted through their multimodal literacy practices, while seeking "to not reinscribe the researched in positions of disadvantage within the hierarchies of dominant discourse" (Hegde, 1998, p. 277). While drawing on a sociocultural theory of literacy, I join contemporary scholars such as (but not limited to) Kevin Roxas, Laura Roy, and Eleni Oikonomidoy whose work disrupts the prevailing deficit-oriented representations of students resettled as refugees, illustrating strengths and not weaknesses, creativity instead of inability, and heterogeneity instead of invariability. An important consideration is to not romanticize these notions and instead situate them in the political contexts through which they shift, occur, impact and precede future experiences, practices, and histories.

The political context which I am now a part of is the US academic world, which carries with it incredible power to produce meaning, knowledge, values. Understanding, questioning, and working through my political, cultural, and historical positions through reflexivity was an important element of the study's methodology. Reflexivity, according to Heath and Street (2008) is "a process by which ethnographers reveal their self-perceptions, methodological setbacks, and mental states, [and] often includes broad general critiques of the field. Reflexivity enables ethnographers to see their research

within historical and structural constraints that result from asymmetrical power distributions" (p. 123). Reflexivity was central to the ways in which I negotiated and understood my multiple roles, perspectives, and histories. During the research process, I practiced reflexivity in my field notes, as well as through memos during the analysis process. Through these writings, I interrogated my own position in the research process, the realities and challenges of doing qualitative research, and the ways in which various institutions (such as the University and the Center) influenced the research. However, these writings were more than personal critical reflections; they also allowed a venue where I could process the unexpected and the "uncomfortable" (Pillow, 2003) in relation to representation and authoring.

In addition to reflexivity, an explicit transparency was also necessary in the community setting. To the girls in the study, I was just another college student, volunteer, American. The girls were also unfamiliar with qualitative research and the potential implications and consequences of participation. Thus I found it important to disclose parts of my background, as well as being completely explicit about my institutional position and the research process.

As I transitioned from a volunteer to a researcher/volunteer at the Mya Community Center, while continuing to process my personal displacement experience, I was neither an insider nor an outsider in this study. Like all qualitative researchers, I was positioned in a third space, or an in-between space among the positions traditionally described as "insider" and "outsider." Dwyer and Buckle (2009) argue that as researchers all we can enter is the space between; we are never insiders or outsiders in various research contexts. There are always elements in familiar contexts that will be unfamiliar,

just like there is always familiarity in most unfamiliar places. In addition, a researcher's position is always changing, as impacted by our daily experiences, by the literature we are reading, and the research that we are participating in. The research process is always entwined with various dimensions of power and consequent degrees of refusal, which as Narayan (2003) argues, is a more productive perspective to take when analyzing relationships in research settings. The qualitative research shapes us, as much as we shape it, as we become intertwined with the research context and the individuals in it, we are also engaging with the politics and histories of that context, while negotiating the politics and histories of research, academia, and our own personal locations. In the following sections I describe the study in more detail, focusing specifically on the study context, and the data collection and analysis processes.

Study context

> *The IRC provides opportunities for refugees to thrive in America. Each year, thousands of refugees are invited by the US government to seek safety and freedom. Forced to flee conflict or persecution, many have survived for years against incredible odds. They step off the plane with next to nothing but their dignity, hope and determination. In Salt Lake City and many other regional offices across the country, the IRC helps them rebuild their lives.* (International Rescue Committee, 2011)

As the above quote illustrates, the United States government participates in the global resettlement effort for those who have fled their homes due to violence and persecution. Up to 80,000 people who are classified as refugees by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are *invited* to resettle and establish new lives in the United States each year. This number represents less than 1% of more than 10 million displaced people who are granted refugee status. The invitation is a promise for

"legal and physical protection, including access to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals" (UNHCR, 2012). In addition, US immigrants with refugee status can apply for residency after 1 year, and for US citizenship after 5 years. In the following section, I provide an overview of the refugee resettlement process and the local context of the proposed study. In particular, I describe the Mya Community Center, its programming, and the community that it serves.

Refugee resettlement process

Refugee resettlement organizations serve those who are able to obtain refugee status based on the 1951 United Nations Convention and additional protocols, which define refugees as those seeking protection from persecution as outlined in greater depth in Chapter 2, and consequently qualify for legal and social protection and support in the Convention's member countries (UNHCR, 2007). Some people who have obtained refugee status after fleeing their home countries are recommended by UNHCR for resettlement, typically in Western countries such as the United States.

Those who are approved for refugee status and resettlement come from a variety of cultural, historic, and social backgrounds, having a broad range of educational and employment experiences, languages spoken, time spent away from their homes, and reasons for fleeing. For example, some have lived in refugee camps for decades, while others may have spent only a few months with family in another country before resettling to the United States. Some children have received extensive, and what is perceived by American standards as "adequate" schooling, while others have had little or no formal education. Similarly, some parents arrive with advanced degrees, while others may not

be able to read or write in any language. While such diversity should call for individualized services during and after resettlement, the process is standardized and designed to provide similar services to all new arrivals.

After being recommended for resettlement through UNHCR, refugees that arrive in this state are typically resettled through one of two organizations, the International Refugee Committee (IRC) and Catholic Community Services (CCS). The city in which the study takes place serves as one of the major resettlement centers for the IRC. The State's Refugee Services Office reports that in the past decade people from 42 countries have resettled as refugees. I presume that this number is a modest estimate; for example, the list includes the former Yugoslavia as one country instead of what are currently six independent nations. In addition, the number does not include those who may have moved to the state from another US state.

Following approval for resettlement to this state, one of the resettlement agencies assists refugee families prior and immediately following their arrival. For example, services include housing arrangements, food, and clothing, as well as outlining an employment plan, arranging social assistance (i.e., food stamps, medical care, and cash assistance, social security application) and enrollment in schools for children and ESL courses for adults. Families are given 3 months to adjust to their new homes and communities, after which they are expected to "start working and begin the process of becoming truly self-sufficient" (State Refugee Services Office, 2012, p. 2). In order to meet this goal, case-workers often try to find any type of employment, typically minimum-wage work, regardless of the person's employment history, something that becomes even more challenging in difficult economic times.

Lastly, it is important to highlight a particular dimension of the local political context in this study. The local religious majority was influential in political, business, and community contexts and managed several local philanthropic organizations known to assist refugees. For example, many residents were employed in second-hand shops run by this religious organization.

Mya Community Center

Refugee families are often placed in low-cost housing complexes that frequently house other refugee families from a variety of places of origin. This study took place in the Mya Community Center in one such housing complex, where around 100 families resettled as refugees called home. The housing community was located in a mid-size city in the Western United States in a predominantly working class residential neighborhood. It was within 15 minutes walking distance from a large community recreation center and library, a grocery store, and was on a major public transportation route. There were 87 housing units in the complex, which were primarily bi-level townhomes with finished basements. Approximately 70% of the community residents had been resettled as refugees, while the rest of the residents included immigrants from South and Central America who did not have refugee status, and a few local families.

Following a tragic murder of a young resident in March 2008, the City government established the Mya Community Center in the housing complex. Funding was secured through the state office of education, the department of workforce services (funds the teen program) and the United Way. Funding was also received through ongoing minigrants (funded the early childhood programs), and private and

organizational donations. Located centrally in one of the townhouses, the Mya Community Center was created as a safe-place for the youth in the complex.

The Mya Community Center served the entire housing community, which at the time of the study included families from Burma, Nepal, the Congo, Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Most residents were of Burmese origin, which included members of the Karen, Karenni, Burmese Muslim, and Chin ethnic groups, and Nepali families. The Center served close to 200 children: approximately 95 in grades K-6, 60 in grades 6-12, and some ages 0-4. Some students who moved away continued to come to the Center and engage in the educational and outreach programming; in January 2012 there were three teenage boys who rode their bikes for several miles every day in order to participate. Most of the students attended surrounding schools. However, some of the older high-school students were assigned partial or all of their coursework through the local adult school, which offered distance and online classes in addition to the face-to-face coursework.

The Mya Community Center provided services for all community members focused on four general areas: education, income, health, and integration. For example, outreach workers identified the needs of each individual family, assisted with issues such as understanding and paying bills, facilitated transportation to health providers, or met any other needs that families identified. Health services, such as an immunization clinic, were provided. In addition, community activities and cultural celebrations were offered aimed at engaging the members of the housing community with the broader residential community with a goal of sharing cultural activities and learning from one another. Educational programming was offered to youth and adults, and it included English as a

Second Language courses, predriving classes, and College Preparation for adults. A program for children 0-3 was developed that prepared children for kindergarten, in collaboration with mothers and a local teacher. Lastly, students enrolled in grades K-12 had access to year-round out of school programming that included after-school programs (i.e., homework help and reading development), and enrichment programming (i.e., science, music, art activities, sports, and field trips). The afterschool program took place every day. For students enrolled in grades K-6 the program was in late afternoons, while the teen program, for students in grades 7-12+ was during the early evening hours (6:30 p.m. – 8:00). During homework-help, the Center provided support for all students, including those enrolled in distance coursework.

There were around 10 staff members at the Center and five were involved with the after-school program. There were also many volunteers from the local community and universities. In addition, missionaries who were representatives of the local religious majority participated in some outreach programming as volunteers, offering for example, cooking classes, or working with individual families. Although the presence of religious missionaries was apparent, it was not clear whether, and to what extent, they participated in religious proselytizing and recruitment in the residential community. While most of the volunteers seemed to be white Americans, the paid staff members came from diverse ethnic, racial, and immigration backgrounds. They spoke a variety of languages other than English, including French, and Malagasy. In addition, the Center also engaged part-time staff from the refugee community. For example, some of the high school and college students who participated in the teen after-school program continued to participate in the after-school activities as paid mentors and tutors for the younger K-6

students. Thus, there were staff members who spoke some of the students' home languages.

Since fall 2009, I had been volunteering at this community center. I began visiting the Center as part of a course assignment for learning about community funds of knowledge. However, after completing the assignment, in which I was a participant observer, I returned the following semester as a volunteer. In this role, I worked with individual students enrolled in secondary schools, assisting them primarily with homework assignments. Many times I was humbled by how much I didn't remember from my high school experience—content specific vocabulary was particularly challenging, as were assignments with minimal guidance and explanation. Other times, I was frustrated by the types of assignments or the teaching methods that the students engaged in. Some didn't have the books or materials necessary to complete the assignments. Others, and particularly those who were older than 18, were placed in distance-learning environments—some of which included minimal to no face-to-face interactions with teachers and peers.

This site was selected because it offered an after-school program for youth that had been resettled as refugees. In addition, it was located in a community where the majority of the students lived and whose parents and families also participated in the Center's enrichment activities. Thus it was a unique location in which students could draw on a range of community, cultural, and formal educational practices and knowledges.

Data collection process

I engaged with multiple sources of data to obtain different perspectives on the observed and discussed multimodal literacy practices, as "…each practice makes the world visible in a different way" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 5; Fine et al., 2000). Data were formally collected from January – September 2013. However, my volunteering experiences from 2009 until the beginning of the study also informed my conceptualization of the study and understanding of the study contexts. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth conversational and multimodal interviews, and document gathering. Table 1 outlines the data collection methods, the data sources that were gathered through those methods, and their conceptual focus and relationship to the guiding questions in this study.

Observation took place during the after-school program, where students worked on their homework assignments and engaged in enrichment activities. During observations, I gathered notes to help me better understand the context, the students' relationships with each other and with the Center staff, and the students' multimodal literacies. The interview discussions were essential for understanding the young women's authoring processes, which included the dialogic intersections of identities, agency, and power, through multimodal literacy practices in translocal spaces.

Access

As I had been a volunteer at the Mya Community Center since 2009, I was familiar with the space, the administration, and the students who participated in its programming. The students generally perceived me as a University volunteer, but the

Table 1
Data collection process

Collection Method	Data sources	Focus	Purpose
Participant observation (~2x/week, 140 hours)	Field notes	Cultural wealth Encoded texts Literacy events Authoring processes Translocality	Better understanding of the observable elements: 1. interactions, activities/actions, and environment(s) 2. multimodal literacies in the students' literacy events and encoded texts (including modes) 3. engagement with literacy and technology
Interviews (~2) with each participant (19 hours)	Audio recordings Field notes Interview notes Interview transcripts	Cultural wealth Literacy practices Authoring processes Translocality	Better understanding of the unobservable elements: 1. girls' perceptions of sociocultural contexts, e.g., histories and experiences with migration, resettlement, and schooling 2. engagement with literacy and technology (current and past) 3. authoring processes through multimodal literacy practices 4. understanding of literacy events outside of the community center
Multimodal interview with 8 participants (8 hours)	Audio recordings Quicktime Screen capture Field notes Transcripts	Literacy Events Cultural wealth Literacy practices Authoring processes Translocality	Better understanding of the observable and unobservable elements: 1. multimodal literacies in the girls' literacy events and encoded texts (including semiotic modes) 2. engagement with literacy and technology 3. authoring processes through multimodal literacy practices 4. understanding of literacy events outside of the community center
Documents (~450 files)	Administrative announcements, pamphlets, etc.; student literacy examples;	Encoded texts	Better understanding of background information on the setting and the literacy events that took place in digital spaces
Follow up interviews (6)	Member checks	Literacy practices Authoring processes	Discussing emerging narratives and data use, particularly preserving anonymity

staff were also familiar with my interests in refugee education in community settings. In Fall 2012, I received permission from the Center to conduct my dissertation study there.

One limitation of this study was that I did not speak any of the students' home languages. Thus, the interviews were conducted in English and observations did not reflect the meaning of what was said in languages other than English. As most of the students' literacy practices reflected English text, I was able to ask the participants to translate instances of Burmese or Karen literacy examples through member checking.

Participants

Participants were selected based on their involvement with the secondary school after-school program, and identification as female and resettled as a refugee. Given that many of the residents were fairly recent newcomers who have spent less than 4 years in the US, focusing on secondary school-aged students allowed me to engage with students that had greater opportunities to interact with multiple social and educational contexts prior, during, and following migration. While there were students from Africa, the Middle East, Nepal, and South East Asia at the community center, the only girls who participated regularly at the afterschool program for teenagers were from Burma or the Karen State.

During the initial observations, I completed a brief survey with the students, which included questions regarding their gender, their immigration status, where they lived previously, and how they moved to the United States. In addition, I also selected students who had at least basic communication skills in English, which was determined based on their ability to understand and answer the survey questions. There were 10 girls

who met the selection criteria and who agreed to participate in the study. All had roots in Burma and were resettled from various refugee camps in Thailand.

After informally confirming the girls' interest in participating in the study, I worked with an interpreter from the community to set up meetings with their families. During this time, I visited the families and with the help of the interpreter, I explained the study, its purpose, and how their daughters would participate. I also explained the consent process and informed the parents that they could withdraw their daughters from participating at any point. Then the parents read through the consent document, which was translated in their home language, before signing it. For parents who did not read, the interpreter read the document. Parents were encouraged to ask questions through the whole process. All agreed for their children to participate. After their parents agreed, I then met with the girls individually, told them again about the study and asked them if they still wanted to participate. Nine of the ten agreed and signed assent forms. Table 2 includes the girls' demographic information as identified at the beginning of the study.

Table 2
Participant demographics

Name (pseudonyms)	Age	Ethnicity	Time in US
Elizabeth	13	Karen	2 years
Love Each Day	16	Karen	2 years
Moo Ka Paw La	16	Karen	4 years
Rainbow	14	Burmese Muslim	4 years
Tait	17	Burmese Muslim	5 years
Tete Pasta	17	Po Karen	4 years
Than Moe Aye	16	Karen/Burmese	5 years
Win Lay	13	Burmese Muslim	5 years
Yoo Na	16	Karen	6 years

Research questions

As outlined in the introductory chapter, the data collection methods focused on the following research questions: 1) How do nine teenage girls who were resettled as refugees from Thailand engage in authoring processes through multimodal literacy practices in translocal spaces? 2) How do their linguistic and cultural resources impact their authoring processes? 3) How do they use literacy practices to produce translocal spaces in which the authoring takes place?

Data collection methods

In this section I outline the primary methods of data collection in this study, which included participant observation, in-depth conversational and multimodal interviews, and document gathering. Data collection took place from January – September 2013.

Participant observation. I was an engaged participant and observer during this study, which means that I was "actively participating in a wide range of daily, routine, and extraordinary activities" at the Mya Community Center (K. DeWalt & B. DeWalt, 2011, p. 5). On average, I visited the after school program twice a week from January to September 2013. However, I was attending more frequently in the early months than during the summer months, as I learned that all of the girls did not participate in the afterschool program, as well as after seeing that the opportunities to learn about the girls' literacy practices in digital spaces were limited by network firewalls at the community center. Thus, while I remained a participant observer during the summer months, I

concentrated more on gathering additional interview data and documents during that time than on participant observation.

Although we are all observers and participants in everyday situations, what distinguishes observation for research purposes is the "explicit awareness" of the situation, environment, activities, and events going on around us (Spradley, 1980). During fieldwork, we begin to notice to a greater degree the details of the environment, the signs, the layout, where people sit and stand, and whom they interact with. What distinguishes ethnographic fieldwork from ordinary observation, in addition to heightened attention to our surroundings, is the "use of the information gained from participating and observing through explicit recording and analysis" (K. DeWalt & B. DeWalt, 2011, p. 2). Thus, the recorded information is used to help gain a better understanding of processes that are taking place.

During data collection, I collected and analyzed information that was both explicit, such as for example instances when students engaged with literacy, along with information that was more tacit, such as contexts of the authoring processes in literacy events. The observations took place primarily during after-school activities for youth in the early evening hours and focused on the 1) interactions, activities/actions, and the environment, 2) multimodal literacies in the students' literacy events and encoded texts, and 3) engagement with literacy and technology. I also captured screenshot images of multimodal literacy events on computers or personal electronic devices. These observations informed questions asked through other methods of data collection, such as in-depth and multimodal interviews.

Initially, I focused broadly on the environment, actions, conversations, and behaviors taking place, eventually focusing on more specific areas, such as interactions with literacy during *literacy events* (Blommaert & Jie, 2010; Emerson et al., 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Literacy events are observable interactions with various forms of encoded text (Hamilton, 2000; Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). A literacy event for example could be a student writing on the board, typing a homework assignment, or reading an online article. Thus, these observations focused on what the young women did with literacy at the community center (e.g., learning [about history, technology, science], communicating, following homework instructions, listening to music, etc.), how they did it (e.g., what languages they used, which modes of text they read or produced, etc.), and with whom they interacted. I began by recording a variety of literacy events that I observed, focusing more specifically on digital multimodal literacy events after one month. Specifically, I focused on the resources and materials used (e.g., white boards, cell phones), places where they happened (e.g., specific rooms, hallways), and who was doing what, with whom (or what), and for what purpose. I observed the format of the texts with which the girls interacted, noting how these texts were constructed and designed (e.g., text, visual elements, etc.). These observations took place in person, as students, for example used the computers available in the Mya community center. However, because the Center limited access to many digital spaces, the amount of data I was able to collect on students' digital literacy events using observation at the Center was limited. Thus, I also observed students' literacy practices in shared online spaces, such as for example social media environments (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, etc.)

with the students' permission. I captured digital literacy events on computers or personal electronic devices through screenshot images.

Continuous and engaged observation of the literacy events was essential for a better understanding of the authoring processes that took place through multimodal literacy practices. For example, it illustrated how the girls enacted particular aspects of their identities through literacy events such as online posting or music sharing. In addition, it illustrated how they positioned themselves in these literacy events (which avatars they used, which images did they post, which music did they listen to, how did they use language in these practices (e.g., English, Burmese, Karen, etc.) as ways to better understand the authoring processes in translocal spaces.

To record and analyze the information gathered through participant observation, I wrote field notes (K. DeWalt & B. DeWalt, 2011; Emerson et al., 2011). The notes focused on the observations and reflected any URL recordings of websites or images that the girls shared. Detailed field notes were written each day during and after the afterschool program observations and focused on the themes outlined above. They were expanded based on any jottings that I took during my participation at the community center (Emerson et al., 2011). In addition to my own observations, I also included direct or paraphrased quotes that the girls expressed in English that emerged from conversations with me, or with other students and staff at the Center. Lastly, the notes included reflections that focused on the observed data, which were then compared and interpreted with the theoretical framework guiding this study (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Interviews. In addition to participant observation, I conducted semistructured in-depth interviews with the selected participants. As multiple sources of data collection

"make[s] the world visible in a different way" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 4), the interviews served to provide additional information regarding the girls' identity negotiation through literacy practices. They were necessary to better "understand the meanings that everyday activities h[e]ld" for the girls (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 102). More specifically, the interviews focused on their perspectives on the multimodal literacy events, along with discussions that deepened an understanding of key concepts such as authoring processes, including agency, identities, and power, as well as their cultural wealth and translocality. In addition, they provided me an opportunity to ask for clarification on observed activities and to get a better understanding of how they articulated specific meanings and actions. These in-depth interviews were conversational and loosely structured based on particular guiding themes (Blommaert & Jie, 2010).

Following initial observations and after rapport was established with the girls, I began conducting semi-structured interviews based on an interview guide (see Appendix B) that included in-depth conversations through open-ended questions (Blommaert & Jie, 2010; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Fontana & Frey, 2008). I began each interview with a "check-in" where I asked the girls how they were doing and how their day was, while also sharing a bit about how I was doing that day. This helped create a conversational environment for the interview, while also allowing us to recognize the moods, feelings, and emotions that provided embodied contexts for each interview. I also encouraged the girls to ask me questions at any point, and when they did, I tried to participate in the conversation fully and transparently.

Topics that were covered included the girls' background, including their learning experiences, as well as experiences with literacy and technology specifically. The

purpose was to better understand 1) their perceptions of their sociocultural context, including their histories and experiences with migration, resettlement, and schooling; 2) their engagement with literacy and technology; 3) their authoring processes that took place through multimodal literacy practices, including identity enactments through which they performed their various selves, as well as various forms of power that intersect these authoring processes. There were at least two interviews with each of the girls, lasting around an hour. Additional interviews were scheduled if necessary for any clarifications or further questions that emerged based on observations and interview discussions.

The first interview focused on the girls' backgrounds, including their learning experiences and cultural wealth. The second interview focused specifically on their experiences with multimodal literacies, including specific topics such as digital literacy events, literacy for communication purposes, and translocality. For example, I asked questions about the types of literacy the girls engaged in during the day and week, such as writing emails, reading online news articles, or playing video games. The purpose was to gain a better understanding of the literacy events that took place outside of the community center.

Second and follow-up rounds of interviews also focused on the girls' expressions of how they authored themselves through multimodal literacy practices. For example, questions focused on the students' literacy practices specifically, as well as their multimodal literacy practices. The purpose of these questions were to better understand how the girls' talked about the events they engaged in, and how they perceived their roles in these literacy events. Similarly, I also gained a better understanding of what they

thought about multimodal literacies, compared to traditional, purely print-based texts, as well as the purposes for participating in these literacies.

Having a better understanding of how they talked about their participation in multimodal literacy events provided a foundation for conversations that highlighted how the girls enacted their identities through these social practices. For example, these conversations illustrated how the girls conceptualized knowing, learning, gender, multilingualism, as well as translocality by focusing on topics that engaged with how they positioned themselves in relation to their languages, histories, and environments. The interviews also helped situate these enactments in the students' understandings of lived experiences in relation to their understandings of the historical, political, and social contexts of present and past localities.

All interviews were scheduled at a time and place that was convenient for the girls. All of them chose to be interviewed at the community center, and the Center was very accommodating at providing a private space even during times when they were not open for afterschool programming. Each interview was audio recorded and then transcribed. I also took field notes that included descriptive information about the environment, comments, questions that arose, body language, and my own reflections on what was said or not said. For example, Blommaert and Jie (2010) write that silences in particular should be recorded as an important element of a dialogue. They write, "we produce silence when we need to think, when we hesitate (i.e. when we find something sensitive, controversial or emotional), when we do not wish to say something" (p. 45). Recording these silences was equally as important as recording the students' spoken expression.

Multimodal interviews. During my first conversational interview with Tete, I asked her where she was from. After noting that she was from Thailand, she said "do you want to see my camp?" I said I would, and we used my phone to search for images of the Umphiem refugee camp. This allowed Tete to show me snapshots that illustrated her childhood context, ranging from the hills around the camp and the bamboo houses, to the outdoor areas, including wandering roosters who were sometimes used in fighting events. In this case, digital technology transformed the traditional interview process as it allowed Tete and other girls to supplement their narratives with visual texts. These actions, along with the lack of unrestricted internet access at the Center, encouraged me to conduct additional interviews that were purposefully digitally mediated.

Following two rounds of semistructured, conversational interviews that focused on the girls' lived experiences, I conducted multimodal interviews to better understand how each engaged with literacy in digital spaces. I define multimodal interviews as interviews that purposefully use multiple modalities, such as aural and visual, and resources, such as digital media, to communicate meaning in a qualitative research process. Due to the Center's firewall, we used my laptop to connect to a personal wireless hotspot. I asked the girls to show me their typical digital activities, and they engaged in posting on Facebook, chatting on ooVoo, looking up images, watching movies, listening to music, and uploading photos, among others. While the girls were able to tell me about their digital literacy practices during the conversational interviews, the multimodal interviews allowed them to show me what those literacy practices looked like in action and explain their significance. For example, Mu Ka Paw La shared her experiences living in the Mae La camp, indicating that viewing the camp's images on Google made her feel

happy. Also, during her multimodal interview, Love Each Day played a music video that was filmed at her camp, featuring an actor who was also her sister's friend. Because they never experienced living in the Karen State, the camps represented their Karen homes prior to resettling to the United States, as these spaces were shaped by Karen histories, social relationships, and language, they illustrated the complexity of belonging to spaces that extend beyond national boundaries. The action of virtually accessing those spaces after resettlement through multimodal literacies supported the production of translocality in which the localities of the imagined Karen State, the lived experiences in refugee camps, and the experiences in the United States as resettled refugees were connected. All multimodal interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and QuickTime's screen-capture feature and later transcribed.

Documents. To support participant observations and interviews, I also collected documents, which provided additional background information on the setting and the processes taking place (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Documents were helpful in gaining a better understanding of the setting as well as the literacy events that the girls participated in. For example, documents that include administrative announcements (e.g., announcement fliers, computer lab information, the afterschool program schedule, etc.), communication, such as chat transcripts, and girls' literacy examples were collected. The examples of different types of literacy included online communications, social media posts, multimodal compositions, illustrations, and academic writing.

The literacy examples were particularly useful for providing information on the girls' specific identity enactments while illustrating the types of cultural wealth that they

drew upon, such as for example the content accessed and shared. In addition, they provided information about the ideologies that impact the girls' identity enactments during the authoring process, explicitly or implicitly, such as for example the language choices that they made to communicate with family or peers (e.g., the prevalence of writing in English).

I asked the girls to share their literacy examples through social media, and specifically Facebook, or by capturing the specific URLs. I also collected additional documents at the community center, picking up information that was publicly available, such as those available on the announcement board. The documents were captured digitally by either scanning or photographing them.

Data analysis

> *Visible literacy events are just the tip of an iceberg; literacy practices can only be inferred from observable evidence because they include invisible resources, such as knowledge and feelings; they embody social purposes and values; and they are part of constantly changing context, both spatial and temporal. (Hamilton, 2000, p. 17)*

In this section, I outline the process of data analysis and interpretation. Data were analyzed through theme analysis (Saldana, 2009), multimodal analysis (Jewitt, 2009), and dialogic narrative analysis (Wortham, 2001), while drawing on the conceptual framework outlined in the first chapter. I begin with an overview of the concurrent analysis process that informed data collection and continue by outlining the multilayered analysis process that followed data collection, which included analyzing the sociocultural framings of the authoring processes and the authoring processes themselves.

As Marshall and Rossman (2006) indicate, "data collection and analysis typically go hand in hand to build a coherent interpretation. The researcher is guided by initial concepts and developing understandings that she shifts or modifies as she collects and analyzes the data" (p. 155). The initial guiding concepts in this study included conceptualization of the elements of the authoring process, translocality, and literacy practice from the critical sociocultural theory of literacy framework.

As I collected the data, I analyzed it concurrently, comparing the emerging themes and patterns with the theoretical framework to better understand the relationship between what I was seeing with the guiding concepts (Heath & Street, 2008). I wrote reflections in my field notes as well as memos that reflected on the contextual and identity enactment processes. For example, noticing how the Center staff perceived literacy and how that influenced observable student practices within the community center space, or noticing that students frequently showed me their grades online to enact an identity of a student (e.g., a good student, or a student who dislikes math). Thus, the analysis represented a process that was "dialogic between existing explanations and judgments (whether held by scholars, outsiders, or insiders) and ongoing data collection and analysis" (Heath & Street, 2008, p. 57). Through this process, I developed a better understanding of contexts within and against which the girls authored themselves through multimodal literacy practices. While this comparative process brought into conversation the collected data with theoretical perspectives and personal "hunches," I also compared data sources to better understand particular activities. For example, when I learned that participants used Romanized representations of the Burmese and Karen languages in their digital literacy practices, I looked for examples of these literacy practices in various

recorded texts that those students shared with me. I would then ask the participants about those encoded texts to better understand their intentions when using those language representations.

Triangulation of data—examining to what extent different sources of data "carr[y] the same meaning"—has been traditionally thought of as an important aspect of analysis in qualitative studies (Stake, 1995, p. 113; Watson-Gegeo, 1988). To highlight heterogeneity, I drew on a broader conceptualization of the triangulation process—*crystallization*—to support an interpretation that accounted for the heterogeneity and fluidity of the girls' identity enactments during the authoring process (Richardson & St. Pierre's, 2008). Richardson and St. Pierre problematize the notion that multiple sources of data support each other by highlighting that there is no one truth that can be found in the data, recommending the metaphor of a crystal instead of a triangle. They write, "Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, and arrays of casting off in different directions. What we see depends on our angle of repose—not triangulation but rather crystallization" (p. 478). To support this analysis process, I practiced what Pillow (2003) calls "uncomfortable reflexivity," which allowed me to interrogate data collection, sources, and my own analysis in relation to representation of the girls' authoring processes. In that process I recognized the multiple meanings in the data collected, my inability to account for all of the possible perspectives, as well as the situatedness within micro- and macrolevel contexts. As Fine et al. (2000) indicate, the crystallization perspective is more productive in situations when contradictions in data are perhaps more helpful than convergences for illuminating the heterogeneity of participants' understandings of complex processes. This

was reflected in the data for this study, where there were many similarities, but also many differences in the ways in which the girls enacted their identities across multiple spaces.

This analysis was supported through the use of analytic notes and memos to document ideas and develop strategies for interpretation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Emerson, et al., 2011). Memos focused on an overview of the process, challenges encountered, discussion of patterns and insights into the data, and organizing bigger themes and ideas. They included visual representations, such as the layout of the Center and diagrams that display relationships, for example who the participants were sitting with in the computer lab.

In order to facilitate data analysis, organization, and management, all data, including field notes, interview transcripts, and documents were entered into Atlas.ti (Basit, 2003; Hwang, 2008). One of the benefits of software for coding is the ability to search and organize the data, generating reports that provide further insights into the emerging themes. In addition, the flexibility of coding in Atlas.ti, such as moving or renaming codes, is another positive aspect of the electronic approach. Atlas.ti was also useful for integration of memos in the analysis process, as it allowed me to create memos for particular codes and data sources.

Next I outline specifically how I engaged in the analysis process during the two stages of analysis. First I describe how I analyzed the sociocultural framings, before outlining the analysis process of the authoring processes.

Sociocultural framings

Based on a sociocultural theory of literacy, all actions, such as authoring processes, cannot be considered units of analysis on their own. Instead, analysis must include an overview of the ways in which these actions are situated in broader sociocultural contexts, including social networks in which they are carried out, as well as the tools that enable these actions. Thus before focusing specifically on authoring as a process, I analyzed the data for the sociocultural framings of the girls' social practices. These included local and global contexts, their social networks – including family and digital/physical communities, and tools – including language, culture, and technology. This level of analysis informed the research questions by illustrating the linguistic and cultural resources that the girls drew upon, as well as their social practices, including literacies and space production.

I began by coding systematically through theme analysis (Saldaña, 2009) in Atlas.ti, focusing broadly on these three areas. Coding was the primary way of examining the data closely, looking for emerging patterns, co-occurrences, themes, and categories. The data, including field notes, documents, and interviews, was initially coded to identify similarities and differences in local and global contexts, which was followed by developing categories and themes that reflected norms, relationships, and emerging theoretical constructs. The observation field notes were instrumental in better understanding the community center context, including the relationships as well as tools used in that space. Documents and interviews were essential for understanding the local contexts of home and school, as well as the global contexts and histories, as well as the relationships and tools that shaped those contexts.

I started by doing initial coding, which focused primarily on descriptive, process, and in vivo codes (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014; Saldaña, 2009). Descriptive codes highlighted the basic descriptive elements of the data, such as demographic information, languages used, the types of interactions and activities the girls engaged in, and different modes of literacy observed in literacy events (e.g., digital, text combined with images or music, etc.). Process codes focused on denoting actions within data – such as interacting with friends, dancing, or enacting identities. Within the descriptive and process codes, there were more specific subcodes, such as enacting a student identity. In Vivo codes were used to capture particular expressions from students, such as for example "hate school," to capture the girls' particular perspectives. Following this initial coding cycle, data was mined using analysis tools in Atlas.ti to help understand co-occurrences and interconnections between the codes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Heath & Street, 2008). This information helped inform the second cycle of coding which focused on pattern coding. This level of coding focused on developing categories and themes, specifically focusing on the girls' practices, rules, relationships, and theoretical constructs. Specifically, patterns illustrated the girls particular skills, such as multimodal composing, and practices, such as Romanizing home languages and producing translocal spaces. In addition, pattern coding helped illustrate the types of relationships, such as friendships between some girls; for example, Tait, Win Lay, Rainbow, and Than Moe Aye were best friends at the beginning of the study, and Tete Pasta and Mu Ka Paw La were also best friends. Pattern coding also helped describe the context of the community center, and specifically its rules and expectations.

In addition to coding, to better understand the contexts and social networks of the

girls' authoring processes, I also used dialogic narrative analysis (Wortham, 2001) to analyze data from students' literacy samples and interview discussions. This analytic perspective helped illuminate various elements of power that shaped authoring processes. This perspective draws on Bakhtin's (1981) concept of dialogicality, thus presuming that narratives are always intersecting with power as they integrate prior voices, experiences, and contexts. This form of analysis took place by examining the narratives in interview transcripts and literacy in detail and looking for verbal and contextual cues that can illustrate how identities are enacted in relation to power. For example, when the girls discussed their educational experiences in Thailand, they used verbal cues like "there" to signify distance and difference from their educational context in the United States and to position themselves in relation to other people and places. Similarly, when they talked about gender norms, the girls often used words like "the adults" or "people" to point to the relationships in their social networks that authored them in particular ways. For example, when discussing the differing gender norms for boys and girls, Win Lay discussed the norms for girls by noting that it's not good for girls to be out at night, because "People see." Here she describes the context of her community in which not only do community members see, and thus monitor, girls' activities, but what they see then influences their actions, such as framing the ways in which they author the girls. In narrative analysis, these cues contributed to the analysis of the authoring processes, pointing to the way that power intersects identity negotiation.

Authoring processes

Understanding the sociocultural framings of the study supported the development of an understanding of the authoring processes that took place within those contexts and social networks, while mediated by tools such as cultural resources and technology. To better understand the authoring processes within the sociocultural frames, and address the research questions guiding this study, I again utilized theme analysis and dialogic narrative analysis, with an addition of multimodal analysis. Analytical categories were developed based on the guiding purpose of the study, focusing primarily on identity and contextual negotiation and hybridity as central elements of authoring processes. Similarities and differences in the data were identified through initial coding, which was followed by developing categories and themes that supported an understanding of authoring processes and translocal productions.

During the first cycle of coding, I noted the elements in the data that identified instances of identity enactments, being authored by others, and power. For example, when I asked Rainbow why she didn't wear the hijab anymore, she noted "But when I came to America, and people look at me, and I was like 10, not 10 like 11, and I walk outside, and they look at me, and I don't feel good." I first coded this as an example of being authored by others. I also used dialogic narrative analysis to identify specific cues that pointed to Rainbow's authoring of self in response to the way that she was authored by others. Wortham's (2001) perspective recognizes how people enact various identities to position themselves in particular ways. When Rainbow talked about "people," she was talking about people who were different from her; she was not referring to Muslims who were resettled from Thailand, or other Muslims in general. The specific "they" she

referred to were different from her in the way that they perceived her identity enactment of being a Muslim.

In addition to analyzing interview narratives, a significant portion of data analysis focused on literacy events, which were observable points in time when the girls did something through literacy. This analysis informed an understanding of literacy practices as a way through which the authoring process took place. Literacy practices were inferred through an examination of literacy events, along with tacit processes that included ways of thinking and knowing, as well as "values, attitudes, feelings and social relationships" (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 7). In this study literacy practices extended across multiple geographic and social spaces. Thus, for example, as numerous spaces converged in a digital environment, the literacy practices were dynamic and fluid, encompassing a variety of intersecting languages, purposes (e.g., academic, social, political), and cultural locations.

As literacy practices can only be inferred by examining multiple instances of literacy events, along with more tacit aspects of interaction, such as relationships and attitudes, second-level coding provided insight into the elements of the girls' literacy practices through which they enacted various identities. These coding cycles included pattern coding for identifying concepts, categories, and themes that emerged (Saldana, 2009). Pattern coding brings together different codes to identify patterns, constructs, and relationships in the data. These themes and categories point to the elements of the literacy practices through which the girls enacted various identities in their authoring processes. Thus for example, it was evident that the girls authored themselves in similar ways (as multilingual, translocal, students, experts, and girls), but the ways in which they did so

differed. Pattern coding allowed me to focus on the similarities, and focused coding allowed me to focus on the differences found within the patterns. For example, within the broader pattern of identifying as a student, the ways in which individual girls identified as students included: refugee, "not smart," respectful, who "listen," ESL, like/hate school, teens, and college-aspiring. In vivo coding here was also helpful, such as in the case of students who "listen" – a term frequently used to describe being a student who pays attention in class.

I then engaged in multimodal analysis of data to better understand the authoring processes. Multimodal analysis allowed me to explore the relationships between the different semiotic modes that the girls used to express and enact their identities (Jewitt, 2009). These included images modified with text, or text-based comments that accompanied particular images, as well as videos accompanied with text. In the case of multimodal interviews, I compared the multimodal texts with the interview transcripts, as this allowed me to better understand the relationship between the texts and the ways in which the girls talked about the texts. Here, it was helpful to use Atlas.ti, as it allowed me to simultaneously compare the multiple forms of data, as well as write up analytic memos associated with particular data points.

In May 2014, following data analysis, I engaged in conversations with the girls regarding data analysis and narratives that were emerging for member checking purposes. I was able to meet with six of the girls, and I asked them about the data interpretations, the possible narratives that would be used to represent their authoring processes, and how the data would be represented (including any blurring of images and texts for preserving anonymity).

Data analysis supported the development of a rich "holistic" narrative that deepened the understanding of the nine girls' authoring processes through multimodal literacy practices following resettlement. I purposefully used thick description (Geertz, 1973) in all of my writing and analysis to provide contextual depth (Fine et al., 2000). The narrative illustrates the students' authoring processes through literacy practices, focusing on the shared spaces in the Mya Community Center and the students' translocal spaces, within larger social, historical and political contexts. Using critical sociocultural theory of literacy as the theoretical lens allowed for a better understanding not just of literacy practices through which the girls negotiated and enacted their identities, but also of the larger power relationships that impacted the identity negotiation and authoring process.

Ethical considerations and responsibilities

> *I worry intensely about how people will feel about what I write about them. I worry about the intrusiveness of the experience of being "writ down," fixed in print, formulated, summed up, encapsulated in language, reduced in some way to what the words contain. Language can never contain a whole person, so every act of writing a person's life is inevitably a violation* (Josselson, 1996, p. 62).

Although this study was approved by the University of Utah Institutional Review Board (IRB), which ensures that the risks, whether physical, emotional, or psychological are minimized for human subjects, I was still uneasy about my role as a researcher and the power that this role carried. As my goal was to better understand and write about the authoring processes through which the girls negotiated their identities, I was engaging with these youths' very personal spaces. I worried about making sure that the participants were not harmed emotionally and psychologically in this research process, today and in

the future. I also worried about my own authoring of these students in the process of being "writ down," and ensuring that those representations would have a meaningful and positive impact on the educational experiences of other resettled youth in the future. In this section, I provide an overview of how I worked to ensure that the risk to participants was minimized, which included following the IRB protocol, ensuring that participants were not identifiable, analyzing the data in depth and with rigor, and engaging the participants in the data analysis process.

Following IRB approval and before beginning this research project, I met with the girls' parents to have a conversation about the study. I then obtained consent from the parents who agreed to have their children participate in the study and assent from the students who agreed to participate, following their parents' approval. The students were told that they could withdraw for any reason at any time during the study without any consequences. As the participants were not native English speakers, I had native Burmese and Karen speakers translate the consent forms and also had an interpreter with me for all of the family visits, as most of the parents were not fluent in English.

One way to ensure that the study's participants were not harmed was to not identify them. This is common practice in qualitative research and is required for studies that involve youth under 18. I asked the participants to chose "secret names," which they were asked not to share with their friends. They liked the idea of a secret name and had fun selecting them.

Ensuring that harm to participants is minimized also requires that the study be carried out in-depth, while being reflexive, open and self-disclosing, and engaging with the participants' thoughts and ideas on the research process. In addition, the data were

analyzed continuously, using a thick description in all of my writing in an effort to develop contextual depth and richer examples (Fine et al., 2000; Geertz, 1973), while recognizing that other meanings and potential interpretations are possible. I also engaged the participants in a member check process (Fine et al., 2000; Janesick, 2000), during the study, as well as after data analysis was completed. For example, during the study, I asked them to elaborate on what they meant in certain posts, how they felt about certain issues (such as the split of the True Fun Stars group), and what their thoughts were on the research process itself. Following the analysis, I was able to meet with six girls and get their feedback on the emerging narratives We also discussed the interpretations and the narratives that would be represented, such as for example Tete's translocal travels or the story about True Fun Stars. In this process I wanted to be accountable to the participants, their stories, words, and meanings. I based this approach in part on Mosselson's (2010) reflection on her study with Bosnian refugee women in New York who regretted not engaging in the member check process and worried about the participants' reception and response to her interpretations of their narratives.

Although this dissertation research focused on engaging with girls' identity negotiation through literacy practices, the broader purpose of the study was to illustrate the heterogeneity that exists within refugee populations in the US Although the girls may have been from the same country of origin, they belonged to different ethnic groups, spoke different languages, and had a range of access to social, financial, and educational resources. This study complicates the unitary political designation of "refugee." As such, this study speaks to the broader translocal issues and experiences of displaced and

transnational youth and the processes through which they negotiate their identities through multimodal literacy practices in digital spaces.

Figure 3: "Looking through Toguchi beach caves to Okinawa's central coastal area: A Profile in Negative Space" by Okinawa Soba is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

CHAPTER 4

NEGATIVE SPACES OF AUTHORING

> "The story never really begins nor ends, even though there is a beginning and an end to every story, just as there is a beginning and an end to every teller" (Trinh, 1989, p. 1).

M: Yea, my mom say that Karen state is beautiful, they have lot of mountains, I want to be there.

D: Yea, so your mom remembers a lot?

M: Yea, and my dad.

D: Yea, so what are some of the nice things they tell you about it?

M: Like, … like, we have principal [prime minister], and he died, his name was Saw Ba U Gyi. He died. He was nice guy. And the Burmese people kill him. I just hear these stories, and I learn that too. He was come to America, and he had a wife, and two children. I learned in this story.

D: And is this, do you parents tell you this? Or, do you...

M: Yea, I learn in school. In Thailand. And I hear people say it too.

(Mu Ka Paw La, interview, March 18, 2013)

When we hear, read, or write stories, we anticipate a predetermined structure – a beginning, where a topic is introduced, a middle, where the story is developed through a

series of actions or events, and an end, which signifies a conclusion. Many stories are representations, interpretations, imaginations, or retellings of actual events, problems, activities, and lived experiences. Yet, lived experiences do not have a beginning or an end. They are dialogically constructed and situated in various intersecting contexts – histories, political actions, social interactions. Contexts shaped by love, violence, play, innovation, travel, power... When shared with an audience however, stories need the structural constraints to meet the listener's or reader's expectations, with an assumption that contextual details are either provided in the story or understood by the audience.

As a framework, critical sociocultural theory of literacy necessitates an engagement with the negative spaces of stories – the often-invisible framings that shape the subject in focus (see "Looking through Toguchi beach caves to Okinawa's central coastal area: A Profile in Negative Space" by Okinawa Soba). Focusing on these framings promotes a better understanding of a particular activity, such as a production of a story – whether it be a fictional tale, a factual recounting of events, or an ongoing multimodal effort to author oneself in digital spaces. Critical sociocultural theory of literacy focuses the analysis of a particular action, such as authoring, on more than just the individual carrying out that action. It encourages us to consider the social and historical contexts, the dialogic relationships between individuals, and the tools they are using, such as language or technology, which make those actions possible. In particular, this theoretical perspective has a strong critical element that accounts for the ways in which power interacts with all actions, tools, actors, and contexts. All individuals have the ability to enact and engage with power, which is considered both as discursive and material, and as something that is productive and not deterministic (Janks, 2010).

Discursive power considers for example validations of what constitutes knowledge, worth, and value, behavioral expectations, or notions of belonging. Material power represents actions, which are often the physical manifestations of the discursive power flows, such as for example actions to limit movement or to apply for resettlement in search of better living conditions. Through agency, people work with these different forms of power and produce alternate possibilities for their actions, when necessary.

This and the following chapters draw on critical sociocultural theory of literacy to provide the contextual framing for the authoring processes that were evident in this study and the stories that emerged. They do not represent the entirety of these framings, nor the entirety of the stories. The framings presented here are a result of my own imperfect engagements with a broader ongoing story, a story that I heard, read, and write about, and lived for a brief period of time as a researcher. The present chapter and Chapter 5 provide an overview of the three intersecting factors that impacted the ways in which the nine girls participated in digital authoring processes in translocal spaces. They include 1) the micro- and macrolevel contexts of authoring, such as those before and after refugee resettlement outlined in the current chapter, 2) introductions to each of the girls, including their passions, social circles, and brief histories, as well as 3) the tools the girls used to participate in digital authoring, which include language, literacy, culture, and technology outlined in Chapter 5.

Global contexts of authoring prior to resettlement

Spaces and places as relational constructs are reflective of social, political, and historical contexts. They are produced dialogically among people, as well as through

discourses. Although each individual's experience within spaces varies given different identities, knowledges, and social roles, a spatial perspective on context provides important framings for the girls' authoring processes following resettlement to the United States. This section focuses broadly on the contexts that the participants shared – including the macro context of the histories of Burma and displacement to Thailand and the micro context of their lived experiences in refugee camps and the United States.

Burma and the Karen State

Burma, or Myanmar,[4] is located in South East Asia and borders Thailand, China, Laos, Bangladesh, and the Bay of Bengal. It has a complex history shaped by colonialism, struggle for independence, and oppression. After nearly 2 centuries, Burma gained independence from Britain in 1948. Following independence, the country experienced political struggle for leadership, which ultimately resulted in a military rule that lasted from 1962 -2011. This oppressive regime was known for numerous human rights abuses and persecution of minority ethnic groups, such as Rohingya and Karen, resulting in decades of global sanctions. For more than 50 years, Burmese Muslim Rohingya people from the Rakhine region were never recognized as residents of Burma and were frequently forcibly displaced from their homes through rape, arson, and other forms of violence. To this day, they continue to face persecution from the Burmese government. The Karen National Union was organized in 1949 to fight for an independent Karen state. Both ethnic groups, along with others, continue to be persecuted to this day.

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[4] Although the country is officially known as Myanmar, most of the participants referred to it as Burma. Therefore I chose to use Burma throughout this dissertation.

There are seven states in Burma, including Kachin, Karenni, Karen, Chin, Mon, Rakhin, and Shan, and eight major ethnic groups, which correspond to particular states. (e.g., the majority of Karen live in the Karen State), except for the Bamar (or Burmese) ethnic group which is the largest ethnic group in the country. Within these eight major ethnic groups, there are more than 130 different ethnic groups as well as around 100 languages spoken. Moreover, members of the broader ethnic groups vary in religious affiliation. Thus, for example, many Karen identify as Christian, while other Karen may identify as Buddhist. In addition, there are other ethnic groups, which are not recognized by the Burmese government, such as the Muslim Rohingya.

For decades, persecuted people have been fleeing from violence directed against them in Burma. Rainbow recounts how her parents escaped after their hometown was set on fire while her mother was pregnant with her. It was wintertime and her mother went into labor during their escape.

R: You know sometime... The soldier... They come like shooting, the houses get fire, a lot of stuff that I see. Like my mom told me, when I born, that, like our town, get fire.

D: hm

R: and she pregnant on me, in the.... What's that called, in the river.

D: aha

R: yeah

D: so she gave birth to you?

R: I was born right there. Like my mom and my father, we run, but my mom she like went to pregnant. (Interview, 03/28/13)

What is interesting is that Rainbow talks about this shared memory as her own. She notes that "a lot of stuff that I see" and "we ran" even though she was born during this trip. This moment of escape and survival represents a key moment in her family's history, defining her own existence as well as her mother's and her own resilience. Thousands of others, with their own survival stories, seek safety from persecution in neighboring countries. Most end up crossing the border into Thailand, seeking shelter in one of nine refugee camps along the border, or living in exile in one of the neighboring towns, such as Mae Sot.

Participants' experiences in Thailand

Most of the participants spent their childhoods in either Umphiem or Mae La refugee camps prior to resettling to the United States. Table 3 provides information about the girls' camps, except for Than Moe Aye who did not identify where in Thailand she lived prior to resettlement. There is a possibility that she lived in another town such as Mae Sot and not in a refugee camp while in Thailand.

Table 3
Participants' refugee camps in Thailand

Name (pseudonyms)	**Camp**
Elizabeth	Umphiem
Love Each Day	Umphiem
Moo Ka Paw La	Mae La
Rainbow	Mae La
Tait	Mae La
Tete Pasta	Umphiem
Than Moe Aye	Unknown
Win Lay	Mae La
Yoo Na	Mae La

The participants generally had fond memories of their time in Thailand. They often reflected on their friendships and relationships, as illustrated in the following excerpts from the initial interview with Mu Ka Paw La:

D: And do you, what do you remember about Thailand?

M: Thailand?

D: Mmhmm

M: There are a lot of people in Thailand. Refugee people. And we live the same (unclear). Like we visit, and like we are family. We love each other. And we, if we have food, and we give it to each other, we share it each other. It was fun. (Interview, Mu Ka Paw Law, 03/18/13)

Despite having limitations on movement, access to education, and income, the Thailand spaces were constructed in part by the girls, their families, and their friends. Thailand was home, and for most of them, the camps were home too. That is where the girls were raised and educated, where they played and made friends, where they got in trouble, where they learned how to be and who to be. Physically, the camps represented what Appadurai refers to as *neighborhoods*—"situated communities characterized by their actuality, whether spatial or virtual, and their potential for social reproduction" (p. 179). The camps' boundaries determined the actual space within which space as a relational construct was socially produced. They were produced through social interaction and thus represented a translocal space. So, for example, even though the girls in the study never experienced living in Burma, or the Karen State, they have lived experiences, and ways of knowing, understanding, and sharing those experiences, which they identify as Karen or Burmese. They learned these identifications through their

experiences in refugee camps, which shaped the way that those Karen and Burmese localities were produced. Through social relationships, locality was produced within these "neighborhoods," reflecting the histories of migration, displacement, and struggle for recognition and right to existence. These camp localities provided social solidarity among people whose existence was threatened by allowing culture, language, and the lives they define to be maintained.

Although all of the girls reported positive feelings regarding their time in Thailand, many also discussed the ways in which the resources and specifically the lack of resources impacted their lives. They had a deep awareness of not the physical boundaries, but also the discursive constructions that shaped their material condition. For example, Elizabeth indicates that the camp residents did not have access to computers, when I asked her if she was able to keep in touch with friends she left behind online (interview, 03/26/13):

D: And do you have any friends there still?

E: Yea

D: Do you talk to them?

E: I don't know I don't even have their phone number

D: Okay. And do they have computers?

E: No. No computers in Thailand.

D: No? Anywhere?

E: No. In big cities yeah, they have computer, but not, not us.

Here, Elizabeth illustrates that the geographic spaces – such as the "big cities" and spaces for "us" – determine the distribution of access. However, she also points to her awareness

of the difference between her social position in Thailand as a refugee and others who have the ability to reside in the bigger cities in Thailand. Her understanding reflects that the construction of spaces is not only mediated by social and historical relationships, but also by power across multiple contexts. In particular, there were two types of power that intersected across these contexts – material and discursive power. Material power was manifested in various ways, including limiting movement by enclosing spaces with barbed wire, applying for and approving refugee status, employing military guards to ensure that limitations are enforced and rules are followed, distributing supplies, food, and resources to ensure refugee residents dependency on support, limiting building resources to ensure the temporary nature of housing, filling out paperwork for resettlement, and navigating limited resources such as by selling products or watching movies through a peep hole. While material power is evidenced through actions, discursive power underpinned many of those actions. Discursive power served to maintain the status of refugee people as inferior to others living in Thailand. In particular, this type of power defined refugees as temporary residents without recognizing the possibility that they may not be able to return to their homes for generations. This type of power also ensured that refugees were portrayed as victims in need.

Tete Pasta similarly discussed the access to the resources in the camp by noting the differences between those who had resources, but focusing primarily on other camp residents:

> T: There, the house are not made, like that. They made with bamboo, and like, the, the leaf, like that. When you have the hole, the rain is gonna come down like that.

D: So you have to make sure it's…

T: Yea. You know some people, if they have video or TV, when you go touch them, they yell at you.

D: Yea?

T: Yea, they say "you don't know how to do it, don't do it, don't touch it," like that. So like this, I don't know…

D: So tell me more about that

T: Because, you like know some people when they have something, they don't want to talk with the people that don't have nothing.

She specifically discussed the way in which houses are constructed using bamboo. In addition to not serving as permanent homes, as illustrated previously in this section, the roofs would also leak during rainstorms. However, in addition to commenting on the house construction, Tete also comments on the wealth inequalities in the camp. As an avid movie fan, Tete talked about her neighbor who had a DVD player but who wouldn't share with others without a fee. As she wasn't able to afford watching movies at her neighbor's house, Tete would at times go and watch movies secretly from outside, through a hole in the neighbor's wall.

Navigating everyday life with the limited resources required creativity, risk-taking, as well as negotiating daily resources. For example, some girls, including Yoo Na and Than Moe Aye were pulled out of school to help their families make extra money. They understood their families' challenges and the need to support them despite such a young age. Than Moe Aye (interview, 03/26/13) remembers Thailand as a fun place where she had many friends, but where her family struggled financially:

D: What do you remember most about it?

T: Have fun with friends. Sometimes like as kids, we go to someone house and get fruit and steal it and run. (laughing). So fun. Some fruit is so good and, ohhh, we don't have any money to pay, like just go under, go get it (laughing).

Despite experiencing challenges, Than frequently talked about missing Thailand. She was also conversant and literate in the Thai language, which gave her a sense of pride but also informed her identity as a Thai person. Given that she was half Burmese and half Karen, she felt that she could not identify as either and instead chose Thai as an ethnic identity with which she was most comfortable. For her, the knowledges gained through experiences with Karen and Burmese cultures were merged into what she considered to be a representation of a Thai locality.

In a struggle to survive, displaced people often develop skills and knowledges that support their resilience in challenging conditions. While support is often available through NGOs and religious organizations for individual people or groups, there needs to be a broader global engagement with the overarching problems that result in protracted displacement. Furthermore, deep critical engagement with discourses that construct refugees in particular ways is necessary, because those discourses help justify the policies and regulations that determine their social status. In the Thai camps, the Thai government relies on the unrealistic discourse of refugees being temporary. This ensures that refugees from Burma live in social isolation at the border, while receiving no legal rights in Thailand, no opportunities for adequate education, or employment. Within these limitations, displaced people from Burma enact power as well, broadly, by forming

community bonds and producing translocality, and on individual levels, such as finding ways of income support, accessing movies, and filing for resettlement to other countries.

The resettlement process can be challenging, given multiple levels of bureaucracy and lack of choice in the ultimate location to which to move. But the choice to go through the process is a powerful one. Although another geographic movement is chosen out of need for a better life, yet again, this time there are possibilities for employment and education. Following resettlement, new localities are produced, primarily in the Western countries, where imagined histories of life in Burma and lived experiences in Thailand merge with new locations in the West.

Local contexts of authoring following resettlement

The nine girls were resettled to the United States. Six moved immediately to the Intermountain State in which the study took place, while three were resettled to different states and relocated to the Intermountain state when their families sought employment. They resided in an urban area of the state.

There are several local agencies that provide services to refugee families, including the International Rescue Committee, Catholic Community Services, and the Asian Association, in addition to state and city government offices, such as for example the Department of Workforce Services. Newly resettled refugees are typically assigned a caseworker who assists them with housing, obtaining social security numbers, and enrolling in schools. According to a government document, following 3 months, adults are expected to find employment and become "fully self-sufficient." However, they typically receive some financial support for up to 2 years, as well as housing support.

Given the pressures to find employment as quickly as possible, many adults find employment in low-paying jobs that don't require English proficiency. Families of the girls in this study had jobs as laundry cleaners, hotel housekeepers, and retail stock clerks. Others took on work-from-home opportunities to supplement their income, such as sewing or mail order packaging. Most of the income however was insufficient for complete self-sufficiency and most of the families struggled financially.

While the context following resettlement provides significant opportunities, which were unavailable in Thailand, such as the right to employment, education, housing choice, movement, and relative safety, it is also situated within a broader social system that provides differentiated access to skills and opportunities to different people, and which does not work in favor of immigrants and people of color. Thus, while the families may be able to find employment, that employment is often limited to working class, part-time jobs.

Although self-sufficiency is promoted as the ultimate goal, what can be achieved within 3 months following resettlement is bare survival. Opportunities to learn the language and acquire skills are difficult to obtain due to the time necessary and limited financial resources. And even when language and specialist skills are obtained, many immigrants face the limitations imposed by various forms of institutional discrimination, such as being encouraged to seek employment that does not rely on the wealth of skills and knowledge possessed. Given these social factors, the opportunity for obtaining long-term self-sufficiency is challenging.

Housing community

All of the girls lived in the same housing complex. The housing community was located in a predominantly working class residential neighborhood. It was within 15 minutes walking distance from a large community recreation center and library, a grocery store, and is on major public transportation routes. There were 87 housing units in the complex, which were primarily bi-level townhomes with finished basements. Approximately 70% of the community residents had been resettled as refugees from Burma, Nepal, the Congo, Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, while the rest of the residents included immigrants from South and Central America who did not have refugee status, and a few local families. Most residents were of Burmese national origin, and included members of the Karen, Karenni, Burmese Muslim, and Chin ethnic groups, all of whom represented members of persecuted ethnic minorities in Burma.

The townhomes occupied a block between a major road on east side, a light rail on the north side, and smaller residential streets on the south and west sides. There were two rows of townhouses going from east to west, with four additional perpendicular rows going from north to south. In between the rows, there were paved roads with parking spaces for each unit. With the exception of cold weather and storms, many of the residents spent time outside. Children were always playing outdoors, running, riding their bikes, and roller skating, or playing soccer. They played on the paved areas, as well as two green areas in the complex, one smaller one, which was tucked behind two rows of townhomes, and a larger one, which was used for soccer on the west side of the complex.

The families living in the community were very friendly with each other. The doors to each unit were generally unlocked and people tended to visit each other frequently. Facilitated through language, the friendships were typically established among people of the same ethnic group. So for example, Karen people were generally friendly with other Karen, while Burmese Muslims were close to other Burmese Muslims in the community. This allowed for language maintenance as well as community building based on cultural knowledges and memories. This also allowed families to find social support as well as support in navigating the US contexts, such as applying for citizenship. However, it also allowed for community cultural norms, and particularly gender norms, to remain uninterrupted.

In the Karen and Burmese Muslim communities, the gender norms regulated the behavior of women and girls in and outside of the home. Most of the girls were monitored in their activities outdoors, their appearance, as well as their roles in the homes. They were responsible for dressing modestly, cleaning and doing house chores, and not interacting with boys. The restrictions were more strictly imposed on older girls. In addition, decisions made by adult males needed to be respected. Although I was more familiar with the Karen and Burmese Muslim community in this complex, it appeared that gendered restrictions were imposed on girls in other communities. For example, older African girls were rarely present at the community center (in fact, there was only one who attended semiregularly while I conducted my research). According to the Center staff, the older girls from Africa were at home and were often responsible for taking care of younger siblings. I observed that their brothers, regardless of age, participated in the after-school program and played outdoors in significantly greater numbers.

Many of the girls found these norms restrictive and expressed a desire for more freedom. They found alternative spaces, outside of the home and particularly online in which they could enact and play with different roles. Some of the examples of how they negotiated their own and community expectations for behavior will be illustrated in Chapter 6.

Mya Community Center

In March 2008, an elementary school Karen girl was found murdered in a basement of a town house in the housing complex where this study took place. Her murder prompted the city to establish a community center in her name in August 2008 to provide resources and a range of programming for youth and adults, while serving as a safe-place for youth.

Located centrally in one of the townhomes, the Mya Community Center provided services for all community members focused on four general areas: education, income, health, and community involvement. The Center's mission was focused on empowerment of refugees and immigrants by supporting integration in the local community. Outreach workers identified the needs of each individual family, assisted with issues such as understanding and paying bills, facilitating transportation to health providers, or meeting any other needs that families identified. Health services, such as an immunization clinic, were also provided. In addition, community activities and cultural celebrations were offered with aims to engage the members of the housing community with the broader neighborhood community with a goal of sharing cultural activities and learning from one another. Educational programming was offered to youth and adults,

and it included English as a Second Language courses, predriving classes, and college preparation for adults. A program for children 0-3 was developed that prepared children for kindergarten, in collaboration with mothers and a local teacher. Lastly, students enrolled in grades K-12 had access to year-round out of school programming that included after-school programs (i.e., homework help and reading development), and enrichment programming (i.e., science, music, art activities, sports, and field trips).

The Center received funding from the US Department of Education, the Department of Workforce Services (funded the teen program) and the United Way. Funding was also received through ongoing minigrants for the early childhood programs, and private and organizational donations. As it is located within a highly religious community, there were also many missionaries, religious organizations, as well as independent donors who supported the Center through donations of time, services, and goods during the study. There were weekly food donations, which were used to provide meals or snacks during the teen program. Others volunteered their time, such as for example offering a zumba class for the youth.

At the time of the study, there were around 10 staff members at the Center and five were involved with the teenage after-school program. There were also many volunteers from the local community and universities. In addition, missionaries from the local religious majority participated in some outreach programming as volunteers, offering for example, cooking classes or working with individual families. While most of the volunteers were white Americans, the paid staff members had diverse ethnic, racial, and immigration backgrounds. They spoke a variety of languages other than English, including French, Tibetan, Arabic, and Karen.

The afterschool program took place from Monday through Thursday, during the school year, and Monday through Friday during the summer. For students enrolled in grades K-6 the program was in late afternoons, while the teen program, for students in grades 7-12+, was during the early evening hours. The Center served close to 200 children: approximately 95 in grades K-6, 60 in grades 6-12, and some ages 0-4.

The resources and programming provided by the Center were often invaluable for the community members. As many students did not have sufficient support in schools, the Center's volunteers were able to support youth in completing their homework assignments, which were frequently not differentiated based on students' individual English proficiency levels by their schools. Moreover, families received support that met their physical and mental health needs as needed. However, while the Center provided various forms of support to refugee families, it is also important to discuss the discursive context that shaped the Center's environment.

Although the Center's focus was on integration and empowerment, the discourses that underpinned the programming were often reflective of assimilative ideologies (Rumbaut, 1999; Wiley & Wright, 2004; Yoon, Simpson & Haag, 2010). These ideologies operate within dominant discourses surrounding immigration and education of immigrant and refugee children. They presuppose that in order to succeed following immigration to the United States, people need to assimilate or become Americanized by changing their ways of knowing, being, and speaking to reflect those of the dominant social group. The message conveyed through this ideology is not an empowering one. By positioning immigrant and refugee knowledges as lesser than those of the dominant American mainstream, this ideology furthers marginalization.

Assimilationist ideologies in the Center's programming are due in part to the reasons for why it was established, as well as by whom it was established. The Center was developed partly out of a need to provide a safe space for youth in the community, but it was structured from a risk-prevention perspective that framed refugee families in a deficit-oriented light. Moreover, the Center was formed by the local government office with little input from the community residents. It drew upon a discursive model that viewed diversity of cultural wealth only in relation to how it enriches the dominant culture and its ideals, not as something valuable in its own right. Supporting a refugee community required instituting a process through which youth are socialized into the dominant ways of knowing and being. From this perspective, cultures other than the dominant mainstream local culture and language stand in opposition or as a supplement to the mainstream culture and language. So, for example, the Center sponsored cultural events or activities, which were designed to celebrate the community's cultural diversity and showcase community members' cultural knowledges and skills, such as through dance, digital storytelling, artwork, and music. However, these skills were frequently compartmentalized to particular events and were not encouraged within the everyday programming of the Center.

The problem with the integration discourse was that integration was perceived as an assimilative one-directional process: The refugee and immigrant community needed to integrate into the dominant community. The dominant mainstream community on the other hand would benefit by learning *about* some of the cultural aspects of these diverse communities without needing to alter itself. Immigrants' cultural and linguistic wealth was to remain in private spaces – spaces of home, apart from the occasional

demonstration of culture for the benefit of others. Thus, the discourse ignores the systemic consequences of one-directional integration: requiring that people integrate into, and thus not disturb a dominant system that oppresses people of color, immigrants, and women.

Through a highly structured environment, the Center expressed many of the elements of the assimilative ideologies in its programming. These were framed from a perspective of the American Dream myth – students who worked hard, spoke only English, and acted in prescribed ways were believed to be the students that would successfully integrate into the local society. Ultimately, these students would be able to achieve personal success, such as attending college, finding a career, and developing leadership skills. Unfortunately, the ways in which staff members carried out programming was influenced by their own beliefs and their expectations of students, which intersected with the broader discourse of integration. For example, while some staff members believed that students had the potential to succeed, others did not. One staff member, in particular, believed that students were unmotivated, lazy, and incapable of ever attending and completing college. Over the course of my observations, this staff member frequently chastised students, while believing that was the motivation that the students needed. S/he cared for the students and wanted them to do well. However, the attitudes displayed and enacted turned many students away from the Center and the support that they could have found in this setting.

Some of the ways in which power was imposed by the Center included structure, rules, and behavioral expectations. When I began observing in January, the Center had just been renovated. I attended the first meeting and a new schedule for the teen after-

school program was announced, which was much more structured than it had been in the past. The schedule was ordered as illustrated in Table 4. This was different from schedules in previous years when all teenage students could attend at the same time for homework help and activities. Homework help was a time when students would bring their assignments and work with a volunteer on completing them. When many students had the same assignment, one volunteer would work with a group, but in many cases volunteers worked with students individually. Activities typically included games, such as jeopardy-style trivia questions that related to core subject areas like math, science, and social studies, as well as life-skills and crafts activities, such as learning what to do in case of fire or creating a wind-chime. While homework help and activities were provided in the past, the new schedule made these activities strictly assigned to particular times and for particular age groups.

According to the new schedule, 10^{th}-12^{th} graders would participate in homework help from Monday through Wednesday from 6:30 – 7:30 p.m. They also had an activity scheduled on Tuesdays from 7:30-8:30 p.m. While this schedule had some stability, the programming for younger teens was much more interspersed.

Table 4
Afterschool program schedule

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
6:30 – 7:30 pm	Homework help: 10^{th} – 12^{th} grade	Homework help: 10^{th} – 12^{th} grade	Homework help: 10^{th} – 12^{th} grade	Homework help: 7^{th} – 9^{th} grade
7:30 – 8:30 pm	Homework help: 7^{th} – 9^{th} grade	Activity: 10^{th} – 12^{th} grade	Homework help: 7^{th} – 9^{th} grade	Activity: 7^{th} – 9^{th} grade

They would receive help with their homework on Mondays and Wednesdays from 7:30 – 8:30 p.m., and on Thursdays from 6:30 – 7:30 p.m. They also had an activity on Thursdays from 7:30 – 8:30 p.m. Although programming was scheduled until 8:30 every day, students needed to stop around 8:15-8:20 p.m. and clean up. This usually involved sweeping the floors, vacuuming, breaking down and moving chairs and tables, cleaning the bathrooms, and taking out trash.

The schedule was announced during the afterschool program, posted on the main entrance door, and students were also given a note to take home that listed their schedule depending on their grade level. However, many of the students found the new schedule confusing and were often upset when the staff enforced it. For example, students were often told to leave if it wasn't "their time" to be at the Center. The younger teens would often try to stop by on Tuesdays, but they would be turned away. Moreover, students working on their homework were often interrupted at 7:30 and asked to either leave or move to the main room downstairs to participate in the planned activity. Tait reflected on this in one of her interviews (04/18/13):

T: And I don't want to come to center, so...

D: Why not?

T: Cause like, I only do like half of time, like not a lot of homework. I have a lot of homework, but... I don't have much time. And after the homework, and like I have to always like, get like... do work. Like help them out. I do help. But like... Always make me sick. And like, when I'm done with work, they say "go home. Go home." I don't like when people say those sort of stuff.

D: Yeah

T: I feel bad. So I don't wanna come. And I don't like when... I don't know. Just bore me out here.

D: Yea.

T: But, when it's like wintertime... I still come here. But now it's like sunny, "wow, I'm gonna go play." Rather than here.

I was also frequently frustrated when working with students when they were asked to leave. Although the youth benefited by receiving support on their assignments, 1 hour was often not enough if one was to make sure that students learn from the assignment instead of completing it so that they can get credit. Unfortunately, this structure encouraged students and volunteers to hurry through assignments so that they could be finished on time.

The schedule was enforced more strictly early on, but became somewhat more lax towards the end of the semester. By that time, the attendance had decreased significantly, which may have been the reason why the staff started allowing students to stay longer or come whenever they needed support.

In addition to offering a highly structured environment through a schedule, the Center also imposed many rules on students who participated in the after-school program. For example, when the schedule changes were announced, a list of rules was written on the board, including:

- You must bring your homework
- Must be doing homework or reading, otherwise, need to keep busy
- Wash your hands
- Clean up 10 minutes before end time

- Speak English

In addition, there were several signs posted throughout the Center that listed the rules, as seen in Figure 4.

These were the rules that guided the programming and were frequently enforced by many staff. Students who came without homework were asked to read. This typically involved sitting down with a volunteer and reading out loud. Unfortunately, the available books were selected based on English proficiency, but most were not age appropriate for teenagers. Instead, many of the students, including many of the participants, would select and read books aimed at younger students, like Captain Underpants or Amelia Bedelia.

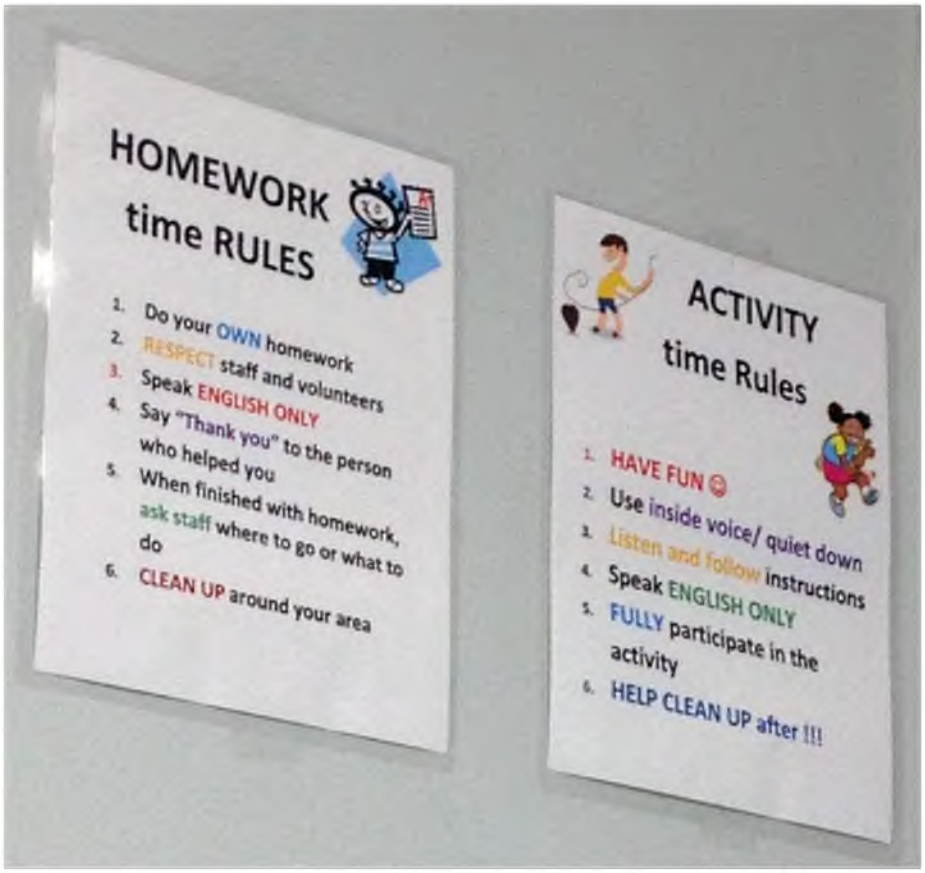

Figure 4: Community Center's behavior expectations

The rule most frequently enforced was hand washing. Upon arriving to the Center, the students needed to wash their hands, before they were allowed to do anything else. A staff member typically checked students in and then told them to wash their hands. There were also signs above the sinks in the main room in most commonly spoken languages that provided instructions for hand washing (Figure 5). While it was certainly important to minimize the spread of viruses, particularly during the flu season, it was a rule that only applied to students. The staff were not required to wash their hands, illustrating that, consciously or subconsciously, they positioned students' health habits and behaviors as inferior to their own. In addition, the posted signs reflected a discursive construction of refugee students as lacking knowledge about hygiene.

Although there were signs in students' home languages illustrating hand washing and mouth covering, these were the *only* signs that relied on students' home languages. During the afterschool program, as well as on field trips, students were discouraged from using their home languages and were reminded by the staff to "speak English."

Figure 5: Hand washing instructions

In addition to homework time and activity rules, there were also specific rules that applied to the use of the computer lab. The computer lab was located on the second floor and included approximately 15 desktops and a printer. The spring semester announcement included specific rules for computer use, including that the computer room was not to be used for anything other than academics. One of the staff members explained that academics meant reading, math, or learning, while all other uses were not allowed. She said that if people were to use the computers for anything other than reading, or math, that they would lose their "computer time." It is important to note that reading implied using preapproved software for English language development and did not include reading based on students' interests. In addition to the announcement, there were several signs posted that detailed approved computer use (Figure 6).

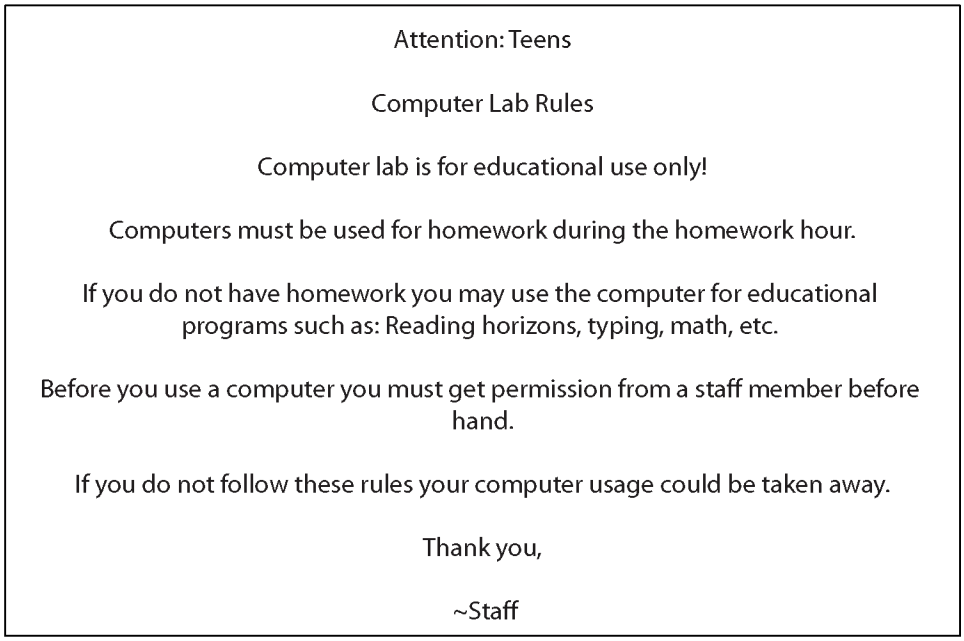

Figure 6: Computer lab rules

In an effort to ensure that students abided by these rules, including using English only, as well as use of computers for "educational" purposes, the Center limited access to many websites. In particular, access to social media sites, like Facebook and YouTube was not available. If attempting to watch a YouTube video, for example, students would see a screen that indicated that access to that website was denied (Figure 7). This was particularly discouraging because YouTube offered many opportunities for students to engage with content that was meaningful to them. In addition, there were many opportunities to learn using visual examples that would have supported the students' homework assignments, such as math or science. In addition to not having access in the computer lab, the Center also did not provide wifi access for personal devices like iPods.

Following the established rules was only one of the ways in which students were expected to demonstrate good behavior. They were also often told explicitly how to act, such as to be respectful, quiet, to listen (be obedient), and to help out. When they demonstrated desired behaviors, students would receive tickets. For example, they

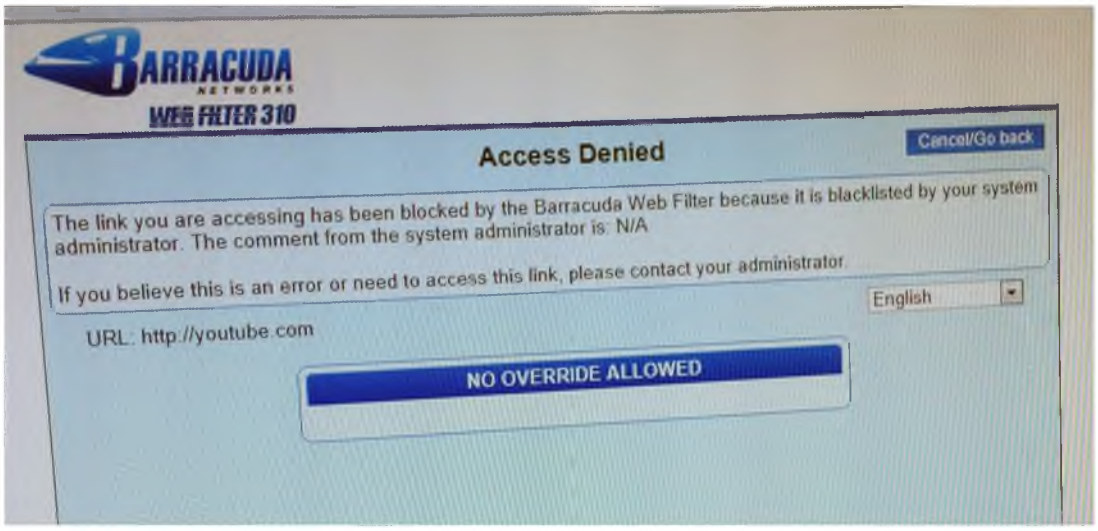

Figure 7: Social media firewall

would receive a ticket for helping clean up or prepare for an activity. Once a month, there was a drawing where several students would receive prizes. The students who had the most tickets had a higher chance of winning a prize.

The prizes ranged from soccer balls and headphones to high heeled shoes and baseball caps. Although the students had a choice in prizes, they would frequently choose what was expected for their gender. So, for example, a girl would choose high-heeled shoes, while a boy would choose a baseball cap. This reflected a general pattern at the Center, where boys and girls frequently did different things. Girls often hung out only with other girls, while the boys did as well. When helping out, the boys typically did the heavy lifting (although the girls always helped put away furniture), while the girls helped more with cleaning. In addition, there would often be teams, girls v. boys during activities. This was partly a reflection of many of the students' cultures, which had very distinct roles for men and women (i.e., men work outside the home, women stay at home), while also having limitations on interactions between men and women who were not family (i.e., women should not dance in front of men; they should limit interactions with men, etc.). However, the Center space also allowed youth to push against some of those limitations to some degree. For example, Elizabeth spent quite a bit of time with one of the boys. In fact, they would spend most of their time together and would rarely hang out with other kids. Also, during celebrations and activities that included dancing without parents being present, many of the girls danced, including Muslim girls who explicitly talked about not being allowed to dance in public. So although gender roles were reaffirmed in this space, the rules and limitations on those roles were often more flexible than at home and outside.

Restrictive environment and learning

When considering learning that takes place in community settings and after school programs, it is important to not assume that these spaces differ from mainstream formal learning settings, and in fact may rely on similar dominant discourses. Although the Center provided valuable resources, its overly structured environment, restrictions on technology use, enforcement of English only use, and lack of engagement with students' cultural and linguistic wealth had a detrimental impact on student participation and learning. Students were trained and supported in completing rote homework assignments without developing an understanding of the key concepts or important skills, like the writing process. Moreover, although the structured activities were aligned with the school curriculum, there was a lack of critical engagement with the ways in which the curriculum does not adequately draw on students' wealth of knowledge. Thus by aligning its programming with an uncritical curriculum, the Center merely affirmed the ways in which schools underserve students with refugee and immigrant backgrounds.

Given its flexibility in selecting and implementing programming, the Center had an opportunity to engage with school-based content in ways that are meaningful to students. For example, by engaging with the multitude of ways in which students participated in reading and writing on a daily basis, the Center staff could have developed lessons that allowed students to rely on those skills to develop other skills necessary for completing their school assignments. Moreover, technologies and social media spaces, such as YouTube, could have been useful in not only learning about complex topics, but also in allowing students to access meaningful content they could have used to support their assignments. The Center's purpose of serving as a safe space for youth diminished

because youth were discouraged from attending due to required participation in curriculum-based activities that did not engage their interests, knowledges, or offer age appropriate content. Although the Center imposed activities on students, which were rooted in dominant discourses about what constitutes knowledge, learning, and success, students and their families resisted those impositions and enacted power in different ways.

During participant observation, I noticed that participation in the Center's activities diminished significantly when compared to previous years during which I worked as a volunteer. Students were choosing not to attend, due to restrictive and complicated schedules, but also because they could not come to the Center to gather with friends. Moreover, parents who were unsatisfied with the Center's activities also disallowed their children's attendance. Students who attended regularly used their home languages to communicate with each other, almost exclusively, despite being told not to use languages other than English. This was particularly useful when groups of students were working on similar homework assignments during which they could share understandings of the particular topic. In addition, while most used the computer lab to complete their homework assignments, many also found ways to access interesting content. For example, they downloaded photos of actors to decorate their binders or accessed websites that were not blocked, like MYMC, a Burmese popular culture site that provides links to music. Unfortunately, because those activities took place in secret, the students were not able to draw on them to support their content-based learning.

When I talked with the students, many of them expressed that they did not feel smart. When I asked why they thought they were not smart, their responses were usually

tied to language, indicating that they did not speak English well enough, or that their reading and writing skills were not developed enough. By relying on the dominant discourses on language and learning, the Center was not supporting the students' knowledges. Instead, the students learned that their backgrounds were interesting, but not sufficient or useful it attaining new knowledge. Instead, English knowledge was presented as the ultimate road to success and students believed that if their English improved, they could perform better. The center provided important resources and support, but if its orientation toward learning and knowledge had been reframed in more critical and socially just ways, it had the potential to ensure that students thrived.

Translocal spaces

Spaces and places are not shaped by boundaries, but instead are constructed through various histories that converge at those particular locations (Massey, 2005), and become meaningful through people's daily activities and practices (de Certeau, 1984). In this study, the historically situated conceptualizations of learning and knowing shaped the students' learning spaces in schools and at the Center. For example, they were to speak English only and were not allowed to access social media websites, such as YouTube and Facebook, as these were not recognized by the Center as valuable spaces for learning and identity negotiation.

Although the girls had opportunities to resist some of the impositions, such as by speaking their home languages or by refusing participation in the Center, others were more difficult. For example, gaining access to blocked digital spaces would require personal devices as well as a personal hotspot – a challenging and costly workaround.

Therefore, the girls used their home spaces to produce translocality in digital settings through multimodal literacies. Here, they used literacies to produce translocal spaces in which they interacted with friends in the community, as well as in other states. They produced and shared meaningful content, such as videos and multimodal compositions in which they combined images with text. By doing so, they disrupted the separation of home (private) spaces and public spaces by producing localities that were hybridized reflections of their multiple contexts. The girls participated in digital settings on a daily basis through smartphones, tablets, iPods, and computers. Digital spaces provided important opportunities for negotiating the complexities of life experiences shaped by displacement and resettlement through language and multimodal literacy practices. In these settings, they were the experts, recognized as knowledge holders. Engaging with these practices and social relationships through a translocal literacy pedagogy, outlined in Chapter 7, can provide meaningful resources for educators working with refugee and immigrant youth, not typically available through standardized curricula.

As access to social media spaces, such as Facebook and YouTube becomes increasingly limited in schools and other formal learning spaces, it is important to consider the learning opportunities that are lost through such restrictive policies. Young multilingual people use social media sites to negotiate their complex linguistic and social contexts and engage creatively with learning and meaning production.

Translocality as a concept as well as a social practice will be outlined in greater depth in the following chapter. Specifically, I will focus on introducing each of the girls and their social networks, before highlighting the "tools" they used in their authoring process. These tools include language, literacy, technology, and culture and represent the

girls' cultural and linguistic resources that enable the actions of authoring (to be discussed in Chapter 6) enacted within the given social, political, and historical contexts.

CHAPTER 5

BUILDING TRANSLOCALITY: SOCIAL NETWORKS AND TOOLS

As the previous chapter illustrates, contexts play an important role in meaning construction. Social, historical, and political contexts shape how particular meanings are produced, what their intended purpose is, and how they are understood by the intended and/or unintended audience. However, on the more micro level, central to the meaning production and understanding are individuals who use tools and signs – semiotic, cultural, and linguistic resources – to produce meaning in dialogic social and contextual interactions. In this chapter, I will focus on describing the participants and the tools they used in their authoring processes. I will also describe in greater detail the concept of translocality as a global sociocultural process through which the participants' semiotic resources and activities were affirmed and connected. Understanding translocality as a global process will support an understanding of translocal identity enactments, which are discussed in the following chapter.

In this chapter I will discuss the cultural wealth that the girls draw upon in their social practices and the ways in which they drew on their cultural wealth to produce translocal spaces through their multimodal literacy practices. First I will provide introductions to each of the participants and their immediate social networks. Next, I will

discuss translocality and offer perspectives on the ways in which a consideration for translocal productions of meaning provides opportunities for hybrid understandings of self-authoring within local and global contexts. Then, I will describe the different translocal resources that the girls used in their authoring processes, illustrating the types of cultural wealth they drew upon. These include technical resources, such as the technological tools they used at the community center, at their schools, and at home, as well as the types of skills, or their digital ways of knowing, which they developed through these technological engagements. These also include language and culture as resources for creating meaning. Understanding the types of cultural wealth that is drawn upon and developed through spatial and social practices will provide an important background to better understanding the ways in which these cultural practices intersect with authoring processes in digital spaces.

Participants

Although all identified as being from Thailand, the nine participants were quite different. They were members of different ethnic groups, including Karen, Karen/Burmese, Po Karen, and Burmese Muslim, and spoke different languages at home, including Karen, Burmese, and Po Karen. Three were Muslim (Win Lay, Rainbow, and Tait), three were Christian (Love Each Day, Elizabeth, and Mu Ka Paw La), one was Buddhist (Tete Pasta) and two did not identify a religious affiliation (Moe Ket Lay and Yoo Na). But these were only partial aspects of their identities that shaped their self-enactments. Table 5 outlines some of the girls' demographic information, including their age at the beginning of the study, ethnicity, and time spent in the United States.

Table 5
Participants' age, ethnicity, and time spent in the United States

Name (*pseudonym)*	Age	Ethnicity	Time in US
Elizabeth	13	Karen	2 years
Love Each Day	16	Karen	2 years
Mu Ka Paw La	16	Karen	4 years
Rainbow	14	Burmese Muslim	4 years
Tait	17	Burmese Muslim	5 years
Tete Pasta	17	Poe Karen	4 years
Than Moe Aye	16	Burmese / Karen	5 years
Win Lay	13	Burmese Muslim	5 years
Yoo Na	16	Karen	6 years

While they had some commonalities, all of the girls had different interests, personalities, and approaches to self-representation in public and digital spaces. This section provides an introduction to each of the girls, including some of their interests, concerns, and passions. The introductions also include information about their immediate social environments as well as resettlement histories.

Elizabeth

On a 90+-degree Tuesday, I was walking with a group of youth on our way to a field trip at an ice skating rink when I noticed Elizabeth walking by herself. She had been sad lately, and a little withdrawn. I hurried up to walk next to her. "Delila, guess what," she said, "My birthday is this Friday." I asked her if she would celebrate; she shrugged her shoulders and noted she didn't know. She was about to turn 14 and it was her "real" birthday – about 3 months earlier than what was listed on all of her official documents. Many of the people in this community did not know their birthdays, and they used estimates instead, most frequently January 1. Thus it was important for Elizabeth to

know the "real" date. She talked about finding out when her real birthday was during two interviews; she found a paper in her mother's documents, and was excited to find out the real date. It was likely that she wouldn't celebrate on Friday, as her family couldn't afford to celebrate birthdays: "my parents don't have money to celebrate," she said.

Elizabeth was one of the youngest participants in the study, as well as one of the most recent arrivals to the US. She resettled in 2011 and enrolled in sixth grade. Her family then moved in the summer of 2012, and she began eighth grade in a new state. The moves, as well as family separation, were difficult for her. She missed her siblings and friends who remained in the original state to which she resettled. During some earlier conversations, she noted that she cried a lot, but people around her were unaware of her sadness, as she smiled a lot, being nicknamed "Smiley Elizabeth." She was also known as "Peace Elizabeth," due to her ability to resolve confrontations among friends. Towards the end of the study, she was feeling more comfortable in her new community.

Elizabeth was also heavily involved in helping at the community center and at her school. This was largely due to the ease with which she moved across multiple languages: "I go to school, sometimes when people need translate, they call me." She speaks Karen, along with "Po. The other, different Karen" (03/26/13), as well as Burmese and English. She was born to Karen parents in a Thai refugee camp, where she learned the first three languages. She was an honors student there, attending school through the equivalent of fifth grade. She enjoyed school, although she found science "boring," and she hoped to attend college like her older sister, whom she admired strongly.

She had a large family. Although they were separated across states and continents, they were a tight-knit Christian family. She had a brother and a sister in a different state,

while she lived with her parents and three siblings in another state. Other, extended family lived in yet another state, while some cousins remained in the Thai camps. Her parents were not educated or literate. She noted that her mother never attended school: "When she was young, younger than me, she always had to work." Although her parents were still working after resettlement, they struggled financially, so Elizabeth's older brother provided additional financial support. This brother was also responsible for monitoring of the younger siblings' behavior, particularly in digital spaces. Elizabeth was discouraged from using social media, including Facebook and YouTube, because they were seen as interfering with her education. In particular, she was discouraged from interacting with boys as well as listening to love songs, until she finishes her formal schooling, including college.

This was challenging for Elizabeth. She had a crush on a boy with spikey long hair who participated in the after-school program and they spent quite a bit of time together at the community center. By the end of the summer, she told me that she could not meet with me for her fourth interview because her parents did not allow her to come to the Center anymore. She never indicated why, but presumably it was to continue monitoring her actions and minimize her opportunities to meet with boys.

Love Each Day

L: Why you don't have child?

D: Hmmm?

L: You don't want kid?

D: I do, I just can't right now, cause I have too much school

L: You go to school?

D: Yea, I'm still studying

L: Still studying?

D: Yea, I went to college, then I went to more college, then more college

L: Why? You don't need to. You getting too old. (Interview 03/15/13)

During the interviews with the girls, I encouraged them to ask me questions whenever they wanted to. Because I was asking them personal questions, I wanted them to be able to ask me personal questions as well. Most did not, but Love Each Day always did, ranging from my schooling experiences, family, to my religious leanings and cooking skills. This reflected her assertive personality, which she often demonstrated through her actions with other youth and staff at the Center. For example, I've seen her push another student off a chair so that she could use his computer because it's faster, and because she needed to be the first one to copy answers for a homework assignment before she allowed others to access the answers.

Love Each Day was 16 years old and a sophomore in high school. She enjoyed math, but not reading, which she found difficult. Like Elizabeth, she experienced loneliness. She had just moved from another state, leaving two siblings behind and found it challenging to make friends in her new school and community.

L: I, I, uhm, I live [here], I mean, I mean, I came [here], I have no friend. When I go to school sometime my friend they get mad on me or something, they don't want to talk to me or something. That's why I feel, I feel lonely. I tell to my brother, take back to me to [previous state]. I wanna go. I wanna go back to

[previous state], I don't want to live [here] anymore. I don't have friends, I can't leave, that's why.

D: Yea

L: You know what I mean? I don't have friends.

D: Yea

L: I want friend. I don't want to, when I walk alone, I need friends, that's why.

D: That makes sense

L: Sometime, but me, some people, they can walk alone, but me, I need friends.

D: I know. I understand.

L: When I leave [State], I had a lot of friend, and, my friend understand me, and we play, just play, and here, when you say something, they don't like it. They don't want to talk to you. I don't know why, I don't know what happened.

D: So the kids here, um, have they been in the US longer? In [here] longer?

L: Longer, aha.

D: So when they are, maybe, they know each other longer?

L: Yea, they know, they know each other longer, but, I don't know, what, I don't know what, why they are, it's so hard to understand. You know they never they ask, understand for me, that's why I'm alone.

She hoped that she could have a mentor to ease her transition. Her previous experiences with mentors were quite positive and she was hoping to recreate those again. Towards the end of the study, she had made quite a few friends and was getting along with more youth in the community. Most of her friends were Karen, but she was also friendly with Burmese Muslim youth.

In addition to developing a new circle of friends, Love Each Day was close to her family and in particular to her older brother. She noted that he was like a father to her and she loved and respected him immensely. He was also financially stable so was able to provide her with anything she asked for, which included an iPhone and an iPod, which she used to take pictures and share them on Facebook and communicate with others through ooVoo (a text and video chat application), which all of the girls referred to as o-v-o. However, he was also monitoring her activity and she tried to follow his suggestions for what he defined as appropriate digital behavior, such as not talking to boys and not spending too much time on social media sites.

Mu Ka Paw La

D: Can you tell me about yourself a little bit?

M: I love my family. I love friends. Talking and laughing. (giggle). I love my sister and my brother. And my friend too. And I love my dad and my mom, because they help me a lot. When I need help with something, they help me.

(Mu Ka Paw La, March 18, 2013)

When I first talked with Mu Ka Paw La, while she completed her recruitment survey, I noted that she was very confident and also highly engaged with digital technology. A few days later, during the consent process at her home, I was struck by the importance of technology in the household. In her family living room, there were three computer desks lining the wall, with three desktop computers. These were shared with her younger siblings -- a brother and three sisters. In addition to technology at home, she

also used the Center's computer lab regularly to do homework. I asked her to compare computers she had at home, at school, and at the Center during our second interview:

D: Would you say that computers at different places, like computers at school, and then the computers at home, and then computers here at the Center, do you use them for different things?

M: Yeah

D: Can you tell me about that?

M: In school, I use about what I have to learn in class. At home, I use it whatever I want [giggle], yeah

D: And then here [center]?

M: I use it what I have homework about

...

D: And out of the three, which one is your favorite?

M: ... At home [laughing]

D: Why?

M: Because... That I want do, I can do it.

At home, she used YouTube to listen to songs, Facebook to talk with her friends, and Google to find information. However, her social media participation was the lowest of all of the participants in the study. She was very concerned about her privacy, but also fearful of people altering her posts. Her participation was also highly monitored. In addition to the location of technology in the house, Mu Ka Paw La's mother was one of the few adults in the community who was highly literate in several languages, including English, and was thus able to monitor social media activities.

Mu Ka Paw La was Christian and attended church regularly with her family and other Karen Christians in the area. At her house, she had a portrait of Jesus hanging on the wall, along with a large Karen flag. Although she was raised in a camp in Thailand, she was actually born in the Karen State:

D: And were you born in Thailand?

M: No, Burma.

D: And how old were you when you went to Thailand?

M: 5

D: So do you remember Burma?

M: No

D: No. and do you hear stories about it?

M: Yea, I hear it. And I kinda don't like it.

D: No, why?

M: I don't know, like, I hear my mom say they are mean to Karen people, they take away Karen state, I hear like that.

D: So it wasn't a good place right, for your family.

M: Yea, my mom say that Karen state is beautiful, they have lot of mountains, I want to be there.

D: Yea, so your mom remembers a lot?

M: Yea, and my dad.

D: Yea, so what are some of the nice things they tell you about it?

M: Like, … like, we have principal [prime minister?], and he died, his name was Saw Ba U Gyi [sounds like Sao Bah Oo-chi], yea. He died. He was nice guy.

And the Burmese people kill him. I just hear these stories, and I learn that too. He was come to America, and he had a wife, and two children. I learned in this story.

D: And is this, do you parents tell you this? Or, do you.

M: Yea, I learn in school. In Thailand. And I hear people say it too.

D: And this was a Karen person?

M: Yea, Karen principal. The first one.

She was 16 and was the only participant who was born in the Karen State in Burma. Her family shared with her about the history and the politics of this geographic spaces, and during the interviews, it was evident how important the Karen State was to her. She was one of the few students who talked about the politics behind displacement and was aware of her state's struggle for independence. Although she had an interest in learning more about her home state and was clearly passionate about its historical and social contexts, she had no opportunities to incorporate these interests in formal learning activities, including at her school and at the community center. However, she never expressed any dissatisfaction with her formal learning opportunities. She appeared to self-monitor her answers and responses during the interviews. She expressed that she considered me as equivalent to a teacher, which perhaps influenced the way that she talked about formal learning environments.

Rainbow

D: So, tell me about yourself

R: Myself?

D: Aha

R: Um, (giggles), I'm Burma... I have a lot of friend... They joke a lot... And, at school, I have little friend. My like, uh, I have a lot of friend, they go to junior high, yea. And only we two, like Win Lay and me, we are same school. But we not same like schedule. Today we have assembly. Like, my friends, they dance.

D: Did you dance?

R: No, I just watch

In addition to spending time with her friends in person and online, 14-year-old Rainbow loved hip-hop dancing and music. She would download songs on YouTube or use a phone to watch videos and learn dance moves. However, when her friends danced during the school assembly, she watched because she was not supposed to dance in public. She described that the cultural expectations for girls were to stay at home, work hard, and do chores, while dancing was discouraged because she was Muslim. She described the difficulties she had in negotiating this part of her identity following resettlement:

R: Yeah, every day, when I go to school, my mom says "why don't you wear the hijab?" And I say "I don't feel good. It's so hot." For me, yeah. When I come home I pray. She says okay.

D: So you wear it when you pray?

R: Mmhmmm

D: Do most people wear it?

R: Yeah like other people, they wear. And you know Muslim people can't dance. My mom told me. But I just dance, I don't care (giggle). But like, I told my mom, can I dance for exercise? And she said... Okay

D: Does it matter if you're just with girls, or if you're

R: Yeah

D: Is she okay with that if it's just girls only?

R: Mhmmm

D: That's cool. um, so did you wear the hijab before you came here?

R: Yeah

D: So when you came here...

R: In Thai, I never take it off. When I was like, four.... I wear, wear, wear, and like, [all the time] but a shower (giggle), I wear and wear. But when I came to America, and people look at me, and I was like 10, not 10 like 11, and I walk outside, and they look at me, and I don't feel good. So I took it off.

D: So it was your decision?

R: Mmhmmm

Rainbow used social media to negotiate her complex social and cultural contexts, as well as to make connections with others who share similar experiences. She was an active daily participant on Facebook, YouTube, and ooVoo, sharing image compositions, conversations, and music. This space allowed her the opportunity to get away from the America she didn't like – America where people judged her based on her appearance, but also the America in which she did not receive appropriate support in school learning spaces. Rainbow struggled with math in school, but also other subjects due to a lack of language support.

R: Like, like, I mean like, I know like, when I write something, like sentence, it doesn't make sense.

D: To the teacher?

R: Yeah

D: And does she tell you what she would like you to do?

R: No. She says like, write, right word. Sometimes I spell wrong, sometimes it doesn't make sense, sometimes it don't work, yeah that's all. Like that.

She was enrolled in ESL and although she had a C, she found that was her easiest class. Based on my observations, her homework assignments were fairly general and she did not have access to language support resources with her assignments.

At home, Rainbow lived with her mother. She was the youngest child and all of her older siblings lived elsewhere. Her father remained in Thailand and married another woman, which she found upsetting. She had fond memories of her time in Thailand and missed her family and friends who were still there. Although she appeared to be having fun, laughing and joking with her friends in physical and virtual settings, she also expressed she did not like living in the United States and wished she could be back in Thailand.

Tait

Being different is what it makes me special between these two very different world. Even if I miss my old world, I know that my new world is safer for my life. However, these two world are my world and I loved it. So many things have change to me. My education, language, cutural, and my life. I am happy that I have my both world besides me. I also wanna say that I thanked the people that who helped me and the Mya Center. I hope

we get more help by having more welcome center for our next generation who's needed help (03/23/13).

Tait was one of the oldest girls in the study and also one of the most outgoing ones. She was Burmese Muslim and had many friends, priding herself on having friends from different cultures. Her friends were in the community, in school, and online. She had several boyfriends in online spaces and she preferred that they remain online, because she was only having fun and was not interested in "real" relationships with all of the boys. At the community center, she enjoyed helping out as a volunteer and working with younger kids, but eventually she withdrew. She rarely attended the after-school activities, which she attributed to the changes in the environment, such as schedules and rules for attendance:

T: [whispers] I don't like Jasmine [pseudonym for one of the staff/volunteer members].

D: [whispers] Why?

T: [whispers] She is mean.

D: [laughing]

T: And she says "Tait, go home, go home" and "why don't you come here anymore?" And I don't come, because I don't want it. And "you better come." When I come, I bring all my homework, and she says "you see, I told you, you should come more, because now you have a lot of work and we don't have much time." I just hate it. (04/18/13)

And at school, while she enjoyed getting along with students and having a certain level of popularity, she did not have a desire to be very popular:

T: I don't want all the people know me. In school. They're gonna be like, always like seeing me, they will know me all the time and like come, do, like hugging mmmmmmhhh. I wanna be like alone sometimes.

D: Too much

T: Yeah too much. And when I see people, you always have to smile and talk. Sometimes I got bored, I don't wanna do anything. Not even smile. When people come talk ... (04/08/13)

These examples also illustrate that she asserted power in her relationships by having the ability to withdraw when she felt it was necessary.

Tait was born and raised in a refugee camp at the Thailand/Burma border. She spent 12 years there, before resettling to the United States with her mother, stepfather, and three siblings, while her two oldest siblings remained in Thailand. Her mother and stepfather also had two more children following resettlement and, thus Tait was one of eight children. Her mother was one of the few parents who was literate in her home language, Burmese.

Tait regularly participated in digital spaces through her iPod, visiting Facebook, ooVoo, and GChat (Google Chat) on a daily basis. Although she did not have internet access at home, she logged onto her friends' or neighbors' wireless networks.

D: So your iPod, it has Internet on it right?

T: Not really. I steal people's Internet.

D: Okay

T: [laughing] But I have to stay outside.

D: Ohh

T: Inside, it don't work so much. It's so slow.

D: But if you open the window?

T: No. I open the door, and I sit on the... [steps]

D: That's cool

T: Usually at night

D: Nice

T: If I don't, one day, if I can't sleep, [laughing]. I'm like, into it.

D: That's why you do it outside

T: All the time. My mom say, "Tait come inside!" "Wait a minute!" [laughing] I'm still like, "let me download something" and I'm chatting people... [laughing] I say, "I have to go, bye." (04/08/13)

She identified as someone who always tells the truth, which was reflected in the way that she openly participated in social media spaces. On Facebook, she shared thoughts, opinions, photos of her drawings, and photographs of self and others. Her postings frequently reflected her current experiences or challenges; for example, she openly shared struggles with her boyfriend, challenges at home, or joyful moments shared with her friends. She also expected others to share their honest opinions. For example, her images were frequently modified with text, or represented as collages, and followed with an invitation for feedback from her friends.

While identifying as someone who always tells the truth, she also identified as a mirror in every interview: "I'm like a mirror, you know. If I meet like really funny one, I'd be fun... You know, just be the way of the other." She demonstrated what this looked like in her literacy practices in digital spaces. When her friends joked with her, she would

joke back. When they wrote in English, she would write back in English. If they used what she refers to as "Burglish" – a Romanized representation of Burmese orthography – she would respond accordingly. Thus, through purposeful enactments of agency, Tait modified the way in which she communicated through literacy to align with the communication and writing style of the other person. In digital spaces, through identity enactments, she was able to negotiate complex power relationships on her own terms. The adults in her community and at home were not engaged in social media spaces, and were unaware of her digital identity enactments. The digital space of authoring was thus not surveilled, allowing her to try out and enact various hybrid identities.

Tete Pasta

D: I want to hear about your iPad

T: (giggles)

D: Didn't [Staff] say that, that you got one at school?

T: Oh, not this one.

D: Oh you have another one

T: Another one. Do you know nook?

D: Aha

T: But I don't know how to use it, so my brother use it. Just only my mom buy for me.

D: Oh, ok. So that one you didn't buy?

T: [Staff] tell you, I won? (giggle)

D: No cause when we were doing the jeopardy, he said Tete's smart cause you won an iPad at school

T: No, not iPad. Like the nook. The teacher, just only three person, me, (name), and one Nepali guy, we won like that.

D: Okay, and what did you do for it?

T: We just go to summer school. And if you do good work in the class, they give you this one ticket, then you have to put your name, and then every day you put there, they pick at it.

D: And how good did you have to do?

T: Like... Do your homework... and like, pay attention. And you go to school every day, like that. (Interview, 08/08/13)

Tete was one of the oldest girls in the study – she was 17 and a junior in high school. She had access to various forms of technology, including an iPad and a computer at home, and she used them to access online content frequently. She also had a nook tablet, which she gave to her younger brother. She was an active participant on Facebook and ooVoo, but she primarily went online to watch movies and TV shows. She was a big fan of Korean pop culture, and particularly Korean dramas. During the four interviews that I had with her, she shared quite a bit about her favorite shows, characters, and movies. Even her pseudonym was constructed based on a Korean movie character and a movie title. She also used themes from these dramas to create fan fiction stories in her composition notebook.

She was a good student and a fairly active participant in the after-school program. Tete was the middle child in her family of five children. Her two older brothers were

already married and living away, and her younger brother and sister lived at home. Her parents worked and also had a work at home business where Tete along with her siblings and other community members helped work on packing products.

Tete moved to the United States 4 years ago, and was insightful about the differences in contexts before and after resettlement, sharing frequently about her life experiences in Thailand. She discussed the challenges and restrictions placed on refugees living in Thailand, such as having to build their own housing, lack of water, power, as well as the difficulties in leaving the camps:

> D: So if you're living in a camp, can you move to Thail… can you go to like Bankgkok?
>
> T: No.
>
> D: They won't…
>
> T: They don't want it. Because you have to go like citizenship of Thai, like that. Because we don't have it. Because we live in refugee camp like that. But some people have it. They have to make, they have to give a lot BAT, like that… (Interview, 04/01/13)

She also reflected on how those differences are reflected following resettlement. For example, she had many friends in the community, which was enabled by her multilingualism:

> D: So what languages do you speak?
>
> T: Um, when I stay home, I speak po-Karen language, but not a lot of Karen. When I go outside, I just speak Karen. And Burmese. Because my friend, they are Karenni, that's why they don't speak like Karen. I just speak Burmese.

> Because Muslim people, they just speak Burmese. Because some people don't want to be friend with Muslim, like that. Because why I be friend, like, the African, I be friend too. (Interview, 04/01/13).

Although there were not many Po Karen people in the community, Tete was able to make friends with youth from other Burmese ethnic groups, including Karen, Karenni, Muslim, and Chin because she was able to communicate with them in Karen and/or Burmese languages. She was also very outgoing and thus made friends with youth from other countries as well by relying on English to communicate.

Than Moe Aye

> "You have to talk to Than Moe Aye! Her entire life is online!" – (Mya staff member, 02/04/13)
>
> *I miss Thailand so much and I will visit Thailand again. I remembered that in Thailand we don't have health care much as USA and it really hard to go to school. I miss my country so much when isew a farms. In USA we have better education and it's a lot easier to go to school. USA and Thailand are a lot different. (03/23/13)*

I was excited to talk to Than Moe Aye. She was a funny and outgoing 16-year-old who loved her iPod, She also liked to draw, listen to music, and play soccer, and was always outside hanging out with friends. But I was also told it may be difficult, because she frequently tends to disengage from participation in program activities.

Than Moe Aye was born in Thailand and often identified as Thai. She did not identify where she was from, but based on the information provided in the interviews, it

appears that she lived in a town outside of the camps, such as Mae Sot. She was the only one of all of the participants who could speak Thai and also frequently wrote notes on her drawings in the Thai language. She also spoke Burmese and Karen, in addition to English. She was also one of the few girls who were not enrolled in ESL at school. She lived with her biological parents, a Karen mother and a Burmese father. She had four brothers, three of whom lived in another state. While in Thailand, her father married a Thai woman with whom he had two children, so Than also had an older stepbrother and a stepsister. Both of those siblings were living as professionals in Thailand.

Although she missed Thailand, as her drawing illustrates, Than Moe Aye was aware of the financial challenges of living in displacement. She frequently made comparisons between the two countries in her interviews, focusing primarily on the financial contexts:

> T: You know when I'm young, I want toy, and my mom go to the market, and I want one toy, but we don't have, and I cry and cry. (Laughing). And we even want shoe, but my mom can't buy because we don't have a lot of money a lot. Like. And she just come back, no shoe. And here, a lot! (03/26/13)

While financial challenges remain after resettlement to the United States, it was much easier to survive and obtain resources to meet basic needs and access services. Even though her mother wanted her to get a job after graduating from high school to help with the family's financial needs, Than Moe Aye aspired to go to college.

Than had several Facebook accounts and frequently took and posted pictures online, in addition to chatting with friends. Although she was an active participant in

social media, I was only able to observe her participation as a Facebook friend on one of her Facebook accounts. Towards the end of the study she became withdrawn from the community – she rarely attended the Community Center programs and was spending more time with her boyfriend in another housing complex. She did not want to participate in the multimodal interview, a final, follow-up interview, nor the member-checking process, noting that she was too busy. Her resistance of the research process provided an additional data layer through which she asserted her position and power in the process.

Win Lay

D: What do you think about things like computers and iPods?

WL: Nothing

D: Nothing? Do you like them?

WL: Yeah

D: Why

WL: Because it's fun

D: Why is it fun

WL: Cause it help you talk with friends when you want it

Win Lay had 1,683 friends on Facebook at the end of the study. One of the youngest participants, at 13, she was also one of the most outgoing, always laughing and joking with her friends both in person and online. I looked forward to my first interview with Win Lay, but during our first one-on-one meeting I was surprised by how shy she was. She was very soft-spoken and frequently answered questions with "yes," "no," or "I don't know." This continued through our three individual meetings. However, with Rainbow's

permission, she joined in on interviews with Rainbow and during those she was quite a bit more outgoing, providing additional perspectives on some of the issues discussed.

Win Lay had been in the United States for 5 years, after resettling from the Mae La camp in Thailand. She initially moved to the East Coast, but then relocated to the Western state in 2010. She only had experiences in the US education system as she did not attend school in Thailand prior to resettlement. She was in seventh grade and disliked many of her courses, except for art, which was her favorite class and ESL, her easiest.

She lived with her Burmese Muslim family – parents, four brothers, and one younger sister. She preferred to speak Burmese, but found it challenging to write it, noting: "I don't know how to write Burmese, but I know how to spell it English" (March 12, 2013). In fact, writing a Romanized version of Burmese was the easiest, although she preferred to write in English. These writing preferences were evident in her heavy social media presence – she regularly participated on Facebook and ooVoo, chatting with friends and sharing and commenting on music, photos, and multimodal images. In her spare time, Win Lay enjoyed dancing and listening to music and particularly hip-hop. She was the only participant who expressed a preference for American artists, such as Tyga, but she also listened to Burmese hip-hop.

Yoo Na

Y: In Thailand, in my house, we grow the mango tree, and we have a lot of mango tree

D: I love mangos

Y: Me too, chili, not like chili, like sweet, like a green, you can't push… too chili. I want to go back to Thailand to try more.

D: I've never seen a mango tree

Y: Yea? Never?

D: No.

Y: Like in the mango, like in the winter, the leaves all fall, and in the summer, they just come out, just on the top, the color is just like orange. And you pick it and you eat with the rice. So sweet. So good.

D: Like the leaves?

Y: Yea

D: That sounds good

Y: Yea, you should try. (03/15/13)

Out of all of the participants, Yoo Na was one of the first to be resettled. She arrived with her family, including four siblings, from the Mae La refugee camp in 2007. Her family has lived in the same housing community for 6 years, representing one of the first Karen families who resettled from Thailand. At first Yoo Na felt lonely, but eventually more people resettled from Thailand, so she was able to make more friends. She had one best friend, and they always did everything together. They worked on homework together, buddied-up on field trips, shared images and pictures on their ipods, as well as music by sharing a set of headphones. Both were Karen and spoke Karen with each other.

D: So you just have the one best friend and you don't really hang out with other kids here?

H: No, if I hang out with them, I'm not being nice.

D: Okay, so you're just…

H: Just talk…

D: But you're not like friends friends…

H: They too noisy. They yell, they screaming, me and my friend are just like, oh, okay, whatever, too tired. And then, there just like 4, 5 people there, … if they get angry to each other, they just come back and talk nice to us. And we, me and my friend say, oh yea, you guys get angry and fighting and come back to us. Oh, we don't need you. But we didn't talk, we didn't, didn't talk to his face, right. We just say, that, so, don't care. If they want to come back, it's okay, we don't need them. Just care about best friend for us.

D: It's good though, it's good to have one good friend

H: Yea. I like to have one friend. Too many that talk about you and make you feel sad. (03/15/13)

Even though her friend was really shy, especially when speaking English, Yoo Na also tried to convince her to participate in this study, saying "You're my best friend! You have to do it!" I explained that she didn't have to do it, but then Yoo Na continued talking to her in Karen, and I could hear her say "YouTube" enthusiastically (03/05/13). Her friend initially agreed, and I received consent from her parents, but she later decided not to participate.

Yoo Na enjoyed watching movies and playing sports, like basketball and volleyball, and she wished she was taller. She had a boyfriend who lived in a different state and she would spend time talking to him on the phone. When she wanted to stop talking to him, she would say that she had to go and that she was busy. Instead, she was

going to watch a movie or do something on her own. She was one of five children, three girls and two boys. Both of her parents worked and they allowed Yoo Na much more freedom than some of the other girls, such as for example having a boyfriend as well as listening to various types of music. Overall Yoo Na was a very private person, preferring quiet and solitude.

In this section, I have introduced the girls who participated in this study, providing a brief overview of their individual interests and social networks. In the following section I will discuss how they used literacy practices as a tool to produce translocality in digital spaces.

Producing translocality

Given the local and global situatedness of the girls' experiences and their practices, it is helpful to focus on translocality when conceptualizing tools and signs; specifically, we can think of tools as translocal devices and signs as signifiers of translocal meanings. Engaging with translocality allows us to consider the social/historical relations in which these meaning-making resources are used across space, while considering how they are transformed through hybridity that results from their use within multiple localities. Considering hybridity as a translocal property of meaning-making processes illustrates the ways in which power systems are highlighted and potentially disrupted when cultural wealth associated with various localities is hybridized through technology.

Appadurai (1996) defines locality as a relational space, which is constructed dialogically and is reproducible through social relationships. Instead of being an actual,

material space, locality is a way of being, knowing, and understanding that is shared within communities and is produced through hybrid connections to multiple localities. These hybrid connections are not bounded by particular nation-state boundaries and can be reproduced in a variety of spaces, including virtual and physical locations.

The girls in this study used multimodal literacies to produce translocality in digital spaces, which they constructed dialogically with others who shared their home languages, interests, and cultural experiences. These spaces allowed the girls to bridge their lived and imagined experiences from the Burmese, Karen, Thai and US localities through interactions with people and cultural resources, such as language and music. Although the participants did not experience living in Burma, or the Karen State, they embodied ways of knowing and being, which they identified as Karen or Burmese. Their experiences in Thailand and the US impacted how they understood and expressed those ways of knowing and being, influencing the ways in which they produced translocality as a hybrid reflection of their Karen, Burmese, Thai, and US localities.

Although translocality is produced in both physical and virtual spaces, I focus primarily on translocal productions in digital spaces through literacy practices. Digital spaces allow for hybrid nonlinear conceptualizations of language and culture, which are expressed and negotiated through multimodal literacy practices. Thus in their productions of translocality through literacy practices, the participants enacted hybrid ways of being and knowing in digital spaces (Figure 8), where the reproductions of their Burmese/Karen/Thai localities were hybridized with their American localities after resettlement. Because they are hybrid representations, these translocal reproductions of localities were not exact.

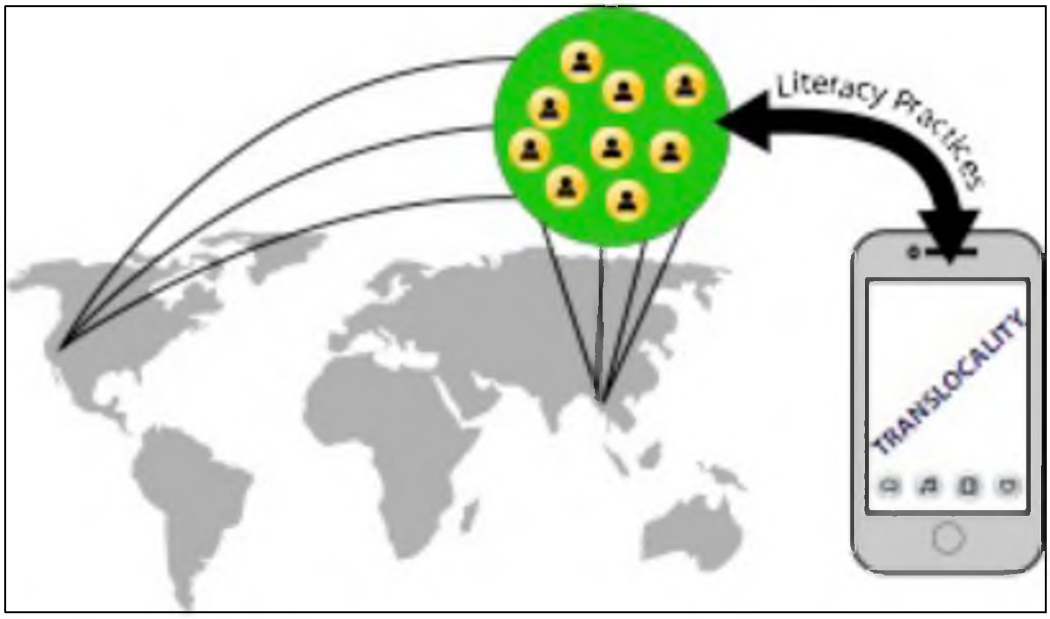

Figure 8: Production of translocality

The youth at Mya Community Center used digital literacy practices to produce translocality in digital spaces, which allowed them to negotiate complex lived experiences and histories. In this case, literacy was a translocal practice that produced spaces in which hybrid intersections of language and culture were possible. The following section illustrates the translocal semiotic resources used in this study, including both the technical tools, such as computers and iPads, as well as embodied dialogical tools, such as language and culture.

Translocal semiotic resources used in authoring processes across spaces

A conceptualization of tools and signs is a central element of sociocultural theories of literacy. These resources represent physical tools, such as pencils, computers, or tablets, but they also include language, culture, including cultural norms and

expectations, and semiotic skills, such as technology use. These also represent elements of one's cultural wealth as they are purposefully used in meaning-making processes, such as the authoring of self. Although the term "tool" and "sign" imply fixity, these resources are anything but. As they serve to mediate activities, they are themselves always in action. Moreover, through action they have an impact on their social context, while they are also changed in the process. For example, although technological tools, such as smartphones, do not change physically, their meaning changes through action – some people may use the phones primarily to call another person, while others, like the girls in this study, will use them primarily to communicate by texting and sharing of original or modified content. Other tools, like language and culture are embodied, existing in the mind as much as action. Through social practice, language and culture change, while also impacting the person participating in this dynamic mediation process.

The girls in this study engaged in various literacy practices to produce meaning and interact in local and global spaces. These spaces promoted language learning and maintenance by enabling opportunities for interaction with friends and multilingual multimodal digital content through literacy practices. The possibilities for these multimodal literacy practices in global digital spaces are enabled through technology with internet connectivity, such as iPods, iPads, touch phones, and computers. All of the girls used technology on a daily basis across different contexts and for different purposes, which included communicating with friends, completing homework, expressing thoughts and ideas, accessing meaningful content such as music and videos, and locating necessary or interesting information. In this section I will first describe their access to technology

across various settings, which I will follow with a discussion of the types of skills they developed for different purposes.

Community center

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the community center provided access to a computer lab, which students were allowed to use for the purposes of completing homework assignments or for working on language or curriculum-skill development. To ensure that rules were followed, there was typically at least one staff member present in the computer lab. During the study, most of the girls used the computer lab for the allowed purposes. Love Each Day, Mu Kaw Paw La, and Yoo Na used the computers in the lab weekly, as they were enrolled in a computer technology class at school. This class required them to complete homework and quizzes online, and they frequently worked together in the lab on these assignments. Apart from computer technology assignments, all of the girls would use the computers when necessary to complete other class assignments, such as writing, making a PowerPoint presentation, or looking up definitions for science. Rainbow and Win Lay would sometimes use the computers to play learning games, such as typing or Reading Horizons, a phonics-based program designed for English reading development.

Most followed the established guidelines and did not use the computers to access content that was not allowed. This was ensured in part by the firewalls that blocked access to specific sites, such as Facebook and YouTube, but also due to staff monitoring and rule enforcement. However, the staff members had different approaches and some were more lenient than others. Thus, when a more lenient staff member was present,

youth were likely to venture away from the prescribed purposes and engage with other meaningful content that they could access. One of the common purposes was searching for images on Google. I observed Elizabeth and her friend searching images about love and then drawing them on paper. Another example includes a website called MYMC, which provides links to Burmese music videos. When nobody was watching, Win Lay noted that she accessed music on this site because she was not able to access YouTube.

All of the computers in the lab, as well as in the main office, were connected to the internet using a wired connection. Wireless internet was not available to students nor the staff. Many of the youth, participants included, brought their personal devices, such as iPods to the Center, but most would not be able to use them to access online information because they did not have devices with internet connectivity or data plans. However, they used those devices in the Center for other purposes. For example, although they were discouraged from doing so, many listened to music using headphones. They also used the calculator features on their devices. But they most frequently used the camera features on their devices. These uses ranged from taking photos of each other, which were then shared personally or through Facebook, to taking pictures for learning purposes. For example, in preparation for a computer technology class quiz, Love Each Day used her iPhone to help with the study process, taking photographs of key terms and their definitions. She then used these as digital flashcards to prepare for her quiz.

Schools

As at the community center, all of the girls had access to computers in school. Many were taking a computer technology class, but others also used computers after

school. All of the girls expressed that, although the school environment was restrictive, they had slightly more freedom to access meaningful content there than at the Center. For example, many of the schools allowed access to social media websites. There were explicit or implicit restrictions in place for times when these sites could be accessed, such as for example after school, or after all of the classwork is completed. In other cases, where access was blocked by firewalls, students found workarounds, such as for example adding the "s" after http://. So while http://www.facebook.com was blocked by the firewall, https://www.facebook.com was accessible.

Home

In addition to having access to technology at the community center and at schools, the girls also had access to technological tools in their homes. This ranged from computers to smaller personal devices like iPods, tablets, iPads or other tablets, and smartphones. Three of the girls did not have internet in their homes, but they found alternative ways to access online content. For example, Tait frequently logged onto her neighbors' wireless networks with her iPod in the outdoor areas of the housing complex. Elizabeth would often borrow her sister's or brother's smartphone, while Love Each Day had an iPhone with a data plan that allowed her to access the internet.

The girls expressed that using technology at home was significantly less restrictive than in other settings. Although several of the girls had family members monitor their participation, they were still able to access a variety of content and engage with technology for a variety of purposes. All of the girls in the study expressed that they used Facebook, YouTube, ooVoo, and various entertainment websites, such as

dramafever.net, a site that provides links to Korean dramas. Lastly, Google was a popular resource for locating information that supported their homework assignments.

Although all girls used digital tools every day, their social media engagement ranged from light (weekly), moderate (several times per week), to heavy (daily) use. Lower social media engagement was linked to familial monitoring of digital activities. All of the girls except for Moo Ka Paw La expressed that their families were not comfortable with technology and did not know how to access and monitor their social media activities. Moo Ka Paw La's parents monitored her digital engagement closely, while Elizabeth's and Love Each Day's siblings monitored their access. Table 6 provides a summary of the girls' access to digital media, digital engagement, and family monitoring of their activities. Although the tools they used, such as iPods or applications such as ooVoo, change quickly and typically become less popular over time, they are often replaced by other applications or tools that enable similar purposes. Through

Table 6
Participants' access, digital engagement, and monitoring

Name (pseudonym)	Access to digital tools at home	Internet access at home	Social media engagement	Family monitoring
Elizabeth	Computer, iPod	No	Moderate	Yes
Love Each Day	iPhone, iPod, Computer	No	Moderate-heavy	Yes
Mu Ka Paw La	Computer	Yes	Light	Yes
Rainbow	iPod, Computer	Yes	Heavy	No*
Tait	iPod	No	Heavy	No
Tete Pasta	iPad, Computer, nook	Yes	Heavy	No*
Than Moe Aye	iPod, Computer	Yes	Heavy	No
Win Lay	iPod, Computer	Yes	Heavy	No
Yoo Na	iPod, Computer	Yes	Heavy	No

*parents asked family members who were familiar with social media to monitor their daughter, but the family members did not engage in it

engagement with these tools, the girls learn not only the most current technologies and applications, but also develop a set of long-term skills that are applicable across different technologies and have the potential to be bridged across different learning settings.

Technology skills

Across various settings, including the community center, schools, and homes, the girls developed a range of technical skills. The skills developed in formal learning spaces included learning *how* to use particular software, such as Microsoft Office products, through direct instruction. In social media settings, the girls demonstrated that their technical expertise extended beyond the intricacies of particular software to include 21st-century skills (Black, 2009) and the "new ethos stuff" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). Black (2009) writes that 21st-century skills represent new literacies, such as technological, visual, information, and multicultural, which are required for success in current economies. Furthermore, these skills include what Knobel and Lankshear (2007) call the "new ethos stuff" – a cultural shift toward viewing learning as participatory, distributed, and collaborative.

In essence, the types of skills developed across different settings reflect Street's (1984) conceptualizations of literacy as autonomous and ideological. For example, in schools and at the community center, literacy was perceived and developed as a set of discrete skills to be learned through the transfer from an expert (such as a teacher or mentor) to a learner, the student, reflecting the process of learning, for example, how to use Microsoft Word. The technical skills developed out of school and out of the

community center, reflected a dialogic social practice perspective in which the girls are both learners and experts.

Most of the girls were well versed in knowing how to use technology, including technology that was taught in schools, such as Microsoft Office Word and PowerPoint. In this section, I will focus on highlighting the technical skills the girls developed through their literacy practices in digital spaces, which center their knowledge and expertise and which were not taught directly to them in school or Center spaces, but which developed dialogically through peer interaction. These include social media mastery, multimodal composition, accessing meaningful content and applications, and online privacy and safety.

Social networking on social media. The girls participated in various social media networks, but identified Facebook, ooVoo, and YouTube as those most frequently used social networks. Facebook in particular was identified as their preferred social media space, which they used to post information, and connect and communicate with friends. For example, Elizabeth talked about the ways in which she made connections with other Karen youth across the United States through Facebook interactions. She noted, "They just text me, they say 'hi, how are you,' and 'good, how are you.' And if we don't know each other: 'where do you live?' I was like, '[western state]' and sometimes I find New York, Washington DC, California, Texas,… a lot of place" (interview, March 15, 2013). She was one of the youngest participants and she was new to Facebook. Others, who were more active in this space, such as Tait, Tete, Rainbow, Than Moe Aye, and Win Lay, had hundreds of friends across multiple Facebook accounts. This social

media space broadened their network of friends, allowing them to connect with other youth who shared elements of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Multimodal composing. By prioritizing the blending of multiple semiotic modes, multimodality enables translocality through bridging and combining of different texts that can have multiple spatial relationships. The girls shared multimodal images that signified belonging and connections to multiple localities. For example, Tete created an image that featured images of her Karen friends around a Karen flag with "KSS 4 LIFE" overlaid on top, where KSS stands for Karen Students of the "State" in which they were resettled. This image, which was shared on Facebook, signified translocality by merging two global locations; the histories that make up the Karen State in Burma intersected with the histories of resettlement in a particular United States location. For others, multimodal composing allowed imagined bridging of locations. For example, Than Moe Aye produced images that represented a visual uniting with her brothers who lived in a distant American state. In these images, she would combine photographs of herself and her brothers into a single image and overlay text that signified their relationship (e.g., my brothers). Multimodal composing in digital spaces was a skill that offered possibilities to virtually bridge relationships across multiple local and global localities and their complex social, historical, and political contexts.

Using languages

Language is an essential element of everyday actions in translocal spaces, and thus represents a key meaning-making "tool" through which translocality is produced. Language thus represents action and it allows for various possibilities and outcomes to

take place in translocal spaces. Through language, and other meaning-making symbols including images and sounds, larger discourses surrounding what is possible and appropriate, as well as what is considered knowledge, beauty, strength, and power are constructed. Similarly, through language and other meaning-making signs, those discourses, definitions, and norms can be challenged and modified in dialogic actions within social practices. Therefore, it is important to consider the ways in which the girls in this study used language in their everyday practices in digital social spaces.

As Table 7 illustrates, all of the participants in this study were multilingual. They typically spoke Karen, Po Karen, or Burmese as their first language, along with one to five additional languages. However, although their listening and speaking proficiency in their home language(s) was high, most had a difficult time with reading and writing. I observed that, when talking to their friends in person, all of the girls preferred to use their home languages. However, when talking to their friends online, they preferred to write in English.

Table 7
Language use

Name (Pseudonym)	Self-identified Language Use (speaking/listening/reading/writing)
Elizabeth	Karen (s/l/r/w); Po Karen (s/l); Burmese (s/l); English (s/l/r/w)
Love Each Day	Karen (s/l/r/w); English (s/l/r/w); Burmese (s/l); Thai (some s/l)
Moo Ka Paw La	Karen (s/r/w); English (s/r/w); Burmese (s/l); Thai (l)
Rainbow	Burmese (s/l/r/w); English (s/l/r/w); Arabic (r/w); Karen (some s/l); Thai (some s/l/r); Spanish (some s/l)
Tait	Burmese (s/l/r/w); English (s/l/r/w); Arabic (r)
Tete Pasta	Karen (s/l/r/w); Po Karen (s/l/r); Burmese (s/l/r, some w); English (s/l/r/w)
Than Moe Aye	Burmese (s/l/r/w); English (s/l/r/w); Karen (s/l/r/w);Thai (s/l/some r/w)
Win Lay	Burmese (s/l/some r/w); English (s/l/r/w)
Yoo Na	Karen (s/l); English (s/l/r/w)

Hybridity of languages was a characteristic of the translocal spaces produced in this study. For example, the girls used English to search for content in Burmese or Karen, or used a Romanized representation of their home languages to communicate with each other. This hybridity not only enabled the production of translocality, but was also a central element of the girls' authoring processes. Chapter 6 will provide specific examples of the girls' enactments of multilingual identities, highlighting specifically how language was used in digital settings. In particular, I will discuss how digital settings and translocal literacy practices in these settings facilitated language maintenance, learning, and play. In addition, I will also discuss the constraints as well as possibilities created in the American locality.

Drawing on cultural resources

Along with language, various cultural resources were intertwined with the girls' meaning-making processes. These cultural resources reflected the girls' cultural wealth gained through lived experiences across multiple contexts. These included ways of knowing and being, which were linked to ethnicity, such as Burmese, Karen, Chin, and Karenni. As most of the girls' were persecuted for being members of particular ethnic groups, they saw the value of maintaining their culture and fostering belonging with others who shared similar backgrounds, while being cautious around people from different backgrounds. For example, Tete explained how many Karen people in the community did not like talking to Burmese people:

T: And some people, they Burmese. They don't like Burmese.

D: Why?

T: I don't know. But like, Burmese soldier, or the Burma, they just fighting with other soldier. I think that. But they think some Burmese not good… Some Burmese not good, like the same way with us. Because like some Burmese people have all the war, like the people fighting, like that.

D: But people still think that all Burmese are the same?

T: Yea, I think that way they think. When they come talk to me, I go talk to them. But some people when I talk to them, "why you talk to them?" (laughing) when they, like I talk too much… first time I not be friend with them, but I talk to them first, and then become friend.

As she was generally outgoing, she was friendly with everyone. However, her actions would sometimes cause concern in the community because she would talk with Burmese youth. Although the Burmese youth in the community were also persecuted by the Burmese government because they were Muslim, they were still perceived as primarily Burmese in the Karen community.

The girls understood culture to represent tradition and norms that determined appropriate behavior, as well as symbols that represented cultural identification and pride, such as cultural celebrations and holidays. For example, many of the Karen girls and their families wore and made traditional clothing. While the girls typically wore the traditional clothing around the house or for special cultural events, their parents typically wore this clothing daily. Other cultural norms, such as for example gendered roles, were also central to the definition of culture. All of the girls, Karen and Burmese, lived in strict male-dominated households where their behavior was monitored. When not in school, they were expected to help their mothers with house-cleaning, cooking, and childcare.

Digital spaces often provided opportunities to draw on histories of lived experiences and hybridize them with their experiences after resettlement. For example, during the interviews, the girls often used digital media to show me their Thailand homes by searching Google images or playing videos. For example, Mu Ka Paw La shared her experiences living in the Mae La camp, indicating that viewing the camp's images on Google made her feel happy. Also, during her multimodal interview, Love Each Day played a music video that was filmed at her camp, featuring an actor who is also her sister's friend. Because they never experienced living in the Karen State, the camps represented their Karen homes prior to resettling to the United States, as these spaces were shaped by Karen histories, social relationships, and language, illustrating the complexity of belonging to spaces that extend beyond national boundaries. The action of virtually accessing those spaces within the post-resettlement contexts through multimodal literacies supports the production of translocality in which the localities of the imagined Karen State, the lived experiences in refugee camps, and the experiences in the United States as resettled refugees are connected.

In addition, the girls also identified as members of a teenage youth culture. This culture intersected various settings, including schools, the community playgrounds, the afterschool program, and digital spaces. In this cultural space, the girls produced youth-defined translocal ways of knowing and being, which intersected ethnic identification with lived experiences before and after resettlement in the United States. These spaces included new norms, expectations, and rules for behavior that were more hybrid and dynamic, while situated within the intersected contexts of their ethnic communities and American communities, and their associated discourses and ideologies. For example, the

girls used digital media to share images and videos in which they were spending time with their friends, such as during field trips and dance performances. Many also shared status updates about their romantic relationships. Although these relationships often took place only in virtual settings, digital spaces provided opportunities to discuss them. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, these relationships were not encouraged in physical community spaces, where adults monitored girls' behavior according to gendered community norms. The girls also shared information about the popular media content that was relevant to them – such as links to Burmese hip hop music videos or Korean dramas.

In the translocal digital spaces, language and culture served as meaning-making tools, or resources, that supported not only the production of these spaces, but also the authoring processes through literacy practices. These resources allowed the girls to engage with socially meaningful multilingual content, such as music, images, and movies, which they frequently shared with friends in digital spaces. Most of this content, such as music videos and movies, reflected their translocal popular culture, which was only available digitally. For example, the girls were not as interested in American popular culture, including music and movies, as they were in Burmese or Karen music, and Thai or Korean dramas. Digital spaces allowed them not only to access this content, which is not available in mainstream American media outlets, but also to engage with this content in ways that allowed them to author themselves and imagine translocal identities. For example, as will be discussed in the next chapter, Tete Pasta used Korean dramas to imagine relationships with characters in these television shows by writing letters to them, as well as responding to drama plotlines through Facebook statuses. Although she did not

share these letters or statuses with the actors, she used multimodal literacy practices to bridge her interests in Korean popular culture, the imaginary localities represented through Korean drama plot lines, and the localities of her experiences after resettlement in digital translocal spaces. Like Tete, through multimodal literacy practices, the girls produced translocal spaces that reflected the dynamic social and historical, as well as physical, virtual, and imagined contexts of their daily lives.

Summary

Complex histories and lived experiences were reflected in the girls' engagement with multimodal literacy practices in digital spaces. These ways of knowing and being reflect the dialogic interactions with people in social networks as well as meaning-making tools, such as technology, language, and culture. These social, cultural, and linguistic resources enabled a production of translocal spaces that supported the development of relationships with peers and sharing of meaningful content. Translocality was recognized and valued in social practices in digital spaces. Translocality in this study reflected a combination of multiple global localities and their histories and social practices. As a social, relational, and historical construct, translocality provides a sociocultural framing for the girls' authoring processes that took place through multimodal literacy.

Social media spaces were central to production of translocality. Because they were flexible, dynamic, and relational, these spaces allowed for active negotiations of hybrid ways of knowing and being. The girls were able to not only connect with others who share their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, but also produce spaces not possible

in everyday environments. For example, they were able to share visual representations of self, such as for example images that bridged multiple localities and social relationships through multimodal literacy practices. Lastly, social media spaces allowed sharing and access of content that was only available in digital settings, such as popular music and cultural content. These rich translocal spaces were not reflected in the girls' formal learning activities in schools and the afterschool program, which limits the potential for meaningful learning experiences in these settings.

The following chapter will illustrate examples of the ways in which the girls used literacies to author themselves in translocal digital spaces. It will illustrate how their identity enactments are situated within various local and global contexts, while at the same time being dialogical and constructed in conversation with peers, families, and various cultural norms. The chapter will also illustrate examples of the ways in which technology, language, and culture, serve as cultural resources that the girls draw upon in their authoring activities.

CHAPTER 6

DIGITAL AUTHORING IN LITERACY AS TRANSLOCAL PRACTICE

Tete: We don't have citizen of Burma, we don't have citizen of Thailand.

Delila: You don't?

Tete: Yup

Delila: What do you have a citizenship of?

Tete: Nothing

Delila: Nothing?

Tete: Just a refugee.

(Interview with Tete Pasta, July 17, 2013)

Although she wasn't a citizen of any nation, 17-year-old Tete's authoring processes were shaped by experiences in the Burmese Karen State, the Umphiem refugee camp in Thailand, and her home in the United States. Her lived experiences reflect the social and political histories of those spaces, including shared memories of persecution, childhood in a refugee camp, and adjustment following resettlement, including discrimination and pressures to assimilate.

In this chapter, I focus on providing examples of how Tete and the other girls in this study engaged in a digital authoring process. From a critical sociocultural perspective

of literacy, any literacy activity that takes place is dialogical and situated within a range of contexts. In this study, digital spaces represented third spaces (Soja, 2011), in which the girls produced translocality (Appadurai, 1996) and authored themselves through literacy practices by drawing on cultural and linguistic resources gained through experiences across these multiple spaces (deCerteau, 1984).

Authoring is a Bakhtinian (1981) concept, which was later developed by Holland et al. (1998). It represents identity negotiation as a process that is situated in dialogic relationships with other people and contexts. In this process, agency shapes identity enactments, while various power relationships shape how these enactments are recognized across various contexts in which they take place. Thus it considers how power intersects identities – both in the ways that identities are enacted and their recognition as agency in social spaces. The power that intersects these identity negotiation processes is dynamic, as evident in the ways in which the girls author themselves as well as the ways in which others authored them. At times, these forms of authoring (authoring self and being authored by others) aligned, while at other times they diverged.

In this study, authoring took place locally – in the homes, communities, and schools, as well as translocally, in digital settings. Given this study's focus on authoring in digital spaces, I call attention to what I call digital authoring – a process of enacting identities in local and global contexts through the use of digital skills and technologies. This study specifically focused on the ways in which authoring was articulated through the use of multimodal literacies, which are characteristic of meaning making in digital spaces. These translocal digital spaces, which bridged local communities with others across the United States, while drawing on multiple historical and social contexts of

global localities, such as Thailand, Burma, and the Karen State, enabled the possibility for a digital authoring process to take place. Digital authoring relies on technical tools, such as computers and portable devices and skills, such as multimodal composing, to provide opportunities for identity negotiation and enactments that may differ from those in physical spaces. The digital authoring process is not linear. There are not specific steps that one must take in order to participate in this process. It is instead defined by characteristics, which include that the process is dialogical, multiaxial, translocal, and playful, while encompassing enactments of and/or responses to power.

The digital authoring process was constructed in relation to local and global people, places, and histories, and was thus dialogic and translocal. However, it also allowed for girls to enact multiple identities at once, which can be perceived as contradictory, such as for example being Muslim and "playing boys." Thus the digital authoring process was also multiaxial and playful. This process was enabled by digital tools, as well as language and literacy practices, and consisted of identity snapshots, which were constructed, shared, and manipulated in translocal spaces. Over time, these snapshots created authoring narratives that illustrated the authoring process in which identities were enacted and modified. The girls used literacy practices as a tool to negotiate and transform their identities and their spaces – they used literacy to construct a dynamic vision of who they are. They also used literacy practices to respond to the ways in which they were authored by others, and in that way illuminate the ways in which power shaped their ways of knowing, being, and imagining.

In their authoring narratives, there emerged five broad categories of identifications: The girls authored themselves as multilingual, translocal, digital experts,

girls, and students. Within these categories, there were similarities and differences in how the girls enacted their identities individually. In the following sections, I will elaborate on each of these authoring processes, while providing examples of how they were enacted through literacy practices.

Multilingual literacy practice and translocality

Language is an essential element of everyday actions in translocal spaces, and thus represents a key meaning-making "tool" through which translocality is produced. Language thus represents action and it allows for various possibilities and outcomes to take place in translocal spaces. Through language, and other meaning-making symbols including images and sounds, larger discourses surrounding what is possible and appropriate, as well as what is considered knowledge, beauty, strength, and power are constructed. Similarly, through language and other meaning-making signs engaged with during social practices, those discourses, definitions, and norms can be challenged and modified in dialogic actions. Therefore, in this section I consider the ways in which the girls in this study used language in their everyday literacy practices in digital social spaces.

As Table 7 in Chapter 5 illustrates, all of the participants in this study were multilingual. They typically spoke Karen, Po Karen, or Burmese as their first language, along with additional languages, including English, Thai, Arabic, and/or Spanish. However, although their listening and speaking proficiency in their home language(s) was high, most had a difficult time with reading and writing. When talking to their friends in person, all of the girls preferred to use their home languages, but when talking

to their friends online, they preferred to communicate in English. In the following section, I will discuss the ways in which language was used in digital settings. In particular, I will discuss how digital settings and translocal literacy practices in these settings facilitated language maintenance, learning, and play. In addition, I will also discuss the constraints as well as possibilities created in the American locality.

Language maintenance through hybrid literacy practices

Written language enabled the meaning-making processes in literacy as a translocal practice, reflecting the hybridity of lived experiences across multiple spaces. This hybridity is evident in Figure 6, which illustrates a conversation in Facebook comments for a picture of Tait and Rainbow. The third line of the conversation shows how Tait used Burmese, using both the Burmese and Latin scripts, as well as English to respond to previous comments. Burmese and Karen languages are both traditionally written using the Burmese script. However, following resettlement, the girls found it challenging to maintain traditional literacy skills in their home languages, due to for example an inability to access content in those languages as well the fonts necessary to display the content in digital spaces. Even Tait, who had access to the Burmese fonts, did not use them frequently because she was aware that her writing would not display properly on most of her friends' screens. Others expressed that they did not know their home language scripts at all, as Win Lay suggested during an interview: "I don't know how to write the Burmese, but I know how to spell it in English…" (interview, March 12, 2013). Here she indicated that instead of traditional Burmese, she used a Romanized representation. Tait described this during her interview: "it's like Burmese sound, and

the... English word. We use alphabet, we use our Burmese language sounds, so we just combine it... it's called Burglish or something" (interview, April 18, 2013). The third comment in Figure 9 illustrates how Tait combined different ways of representation to construct Burglish.

All of the participants identified that they were able to communicate in Romanized representations of either Burmese or Karen languages. Learning how to use the Latin script was a collaborative and interactive process that took place through literacy practices in digital spaces. Elizabeth discusses how she learned to Romanize Karen text by watching YouTube videos of Karen songs with Romanized subtitles:

> I just learned. And the song, about like, love song. When I look at the picture, they have Karen title. When the letter come out and then, English can translate. Easy for English people to say it, yeah. Like that…. Then I just learned, I just look somewhere and I learned some of it, when I write it to my friend, I use that kind of word in my text to them. "What are you writing" [they'll say]. And I just said "read it," and what gonna come out, and try, try, and they make it out. (Interview, April 22, 2013).

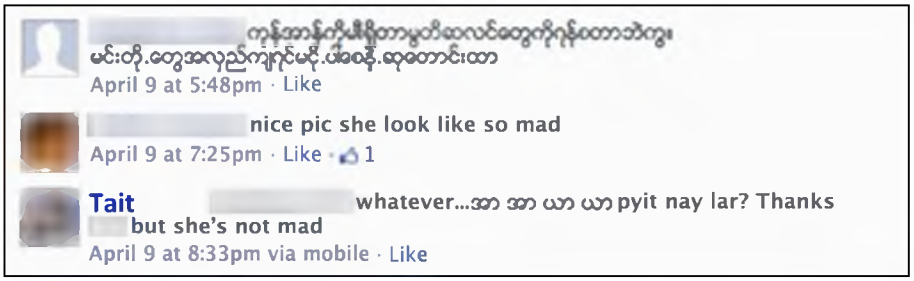

Figure 9: Example of hybrid language use

Sharing of content, including music videos, text messages, and online chats following resettlement established engagement in literacy practices that reflected a bridging of the girls' Burmese or Karen ways of knowing with their locality in the United States. Writing Burmese and Karen using the Latin alphabet allowed the girls to communicate with peers who share their linguistic and post-resettlement backgrounds, while enabling home language maintenance in digital spaces.

In addition to accessing content, translocality as a literacy practice, which reflects hybridity of lived experiences across multiple spaces, is evident in other forms of digital participation. The girls often used a combination of English and Karen or Burmese (and sometimes both) in their digital interactions, productions, and information gathering. All of the participants indicated that they use YouTube and other websites to access entertaining content, including music, tv shows, and funny videos in various languages. For example, they may use English to search for Burmese music, or Romanized interpretations of the Karen language to search for videos. For example, Tait combined a Romanized interpretation of the artist's name (Bay Gyi) with the English phrase "new song 2013" to search for a song by that artist on YouTube. Similarly, Elizabeth searched for the Karen song called "Next five minute," which is entirely in the Karen language but searchable and accessible in English.

These examples illustrate the way in which YouTube allows for a hybrid conceptualization of language. Particularly interesting is that the girls produced written language that meets their communication needs in digital spaces. Since the Burmese and Karen languages did not have a formal Romanized representation, the girls frequently wrote either Burmese or Karen using the Latin alphabet. Most of the girls used a

Romanized representation because they did not know how to access, install, and use Burmese fonts on their computers, but also because some are not comfortable writing Burmese or Karen orthography. Thus, they frequently use a Romanized representation to write in the Karen or Burmese language. In this way, they redefined what it means to maintain literacy in their home languages. While this new form of the written Burmese and Karen languages is not formally recognized, it is a valuable representation of meaning in translocal digital spaces.

Language learning

Dynamic translocal productions through multilingual and multimodal literacy practices in digital spaces promote a range of language maintenance and learning. For example, the girls frequently accessed videos with subtitles in either their home languages or in English. They indicated that accessing socially meaningful content on YouTube helped them learn the words to a song in their home language, or learn English by listening to their home language and reading the English subtitles. This illustrates the highly contextual nature of literacy as a translocal practice. For example, in her multimodal interview, Mu Ka Paw La selected two Karen music videos with subtitles. The first was a love song with Karen subtitles, while the second song focused on school friendships and offers subtitles in English. Both songs were meaningful in the post-resettlement context. The love song provides a way to connect with friends, as all of the girls enjoyed this music genre, while also promoting Karen literacy maintenance. The friendship song allowed Mu Ka Paw La to learn unfamiliar English words by reading the subtitles, which she felt was necessary for her context after resettlement, but it was also

meaningful to her because it reminded her of school friends and relationships. These examples reflect the ways in which she engages with languages and a culture she values.

In addition to YouTube, Facebook also supported the girls' English learning. Although the participants engaged with various languages on Facebook, they more frequently used English in their communication. Many of the girls expressed that they specifically used English on Facebook to support their English learning. All expressed challenges with reading and writing English, finding the social media sites supportive for language learning. For example, they often used the spellchecker to modify spelling, but they also used the space to learn from each other. For example, Win Lay frequently corrected Rainbow's spelling in Facebook posts. On August 23rd, during the first week of school, Rainbow posted a multimodal composition of herself that included three images with the text "Happy Life" imposed diagonally across, commenting: "So Much Fun In School With (friends). We joke around hv a snake we laugh..!" Win Lay was the first to comment and note "Snack Not Snake ~!", to which Rainbow responded by noting that it was just "the iPhone problem with spelling." Being connected also allowed the girls to access other websites, such as Google, and look up the meaning of words they did not know. The friendly space also allowed the girls to play with spellings – both for fun, but also as part of language learning and literacy development.

Language play

It can be argued that language learning and maintenance on Facebook promotes meaning-making through language play. To conceptualize how language learning and maintenance takes place through play, the concept of "making worlds" is useful (Holland

et al., 1998). This concept relies on Vygotsky's conceptualization of social play, which illustrates the dynamic and creative nature of social practices. Playfulness during social practices supports possibilities for exploring and making sense of one's social, historical, and political contexts. Opportunities for playfulness in literacy practices in digital spaces encourage creative ways of meaning production. For example, Tete, a Karen junior in high school, frequently used creative combinations of symbols to produce meaning in English. On July 11, she posted on Facebook "Today I went to university and have a lot fun and when I came back I go play basketball \ / \ /! + |~| |~|!|\/| $0 |~|4pp ¥." Here Tete used symbols to write in English, which in this case represented "with him so happy." Tete and other girls also frequently played with spelling, using words like "fri" to represent "friend," and "q" to represent "cute." These playful spellings were specific to this group of youth and were not typically used in mainstream American online chat acronyms and abbreviations.

Multilingualism, multimodality, and power

Although digital multimodal literacies have created new opportunities for meaning-making, it is important to consider how power intersects the ways in which young people participate in these literacy practices. For example, the young women live in a context in which a high value is placed on English learning and mastery, without a consideration for how their community contexts promote learning in complex and creative ways. Street (2009) calls for an ideological view of multimodal literacy practices that considers the impact of power on the contexts in which these practices take place.

Although there are frequent examples of multilingual and hybrid language use, the prevalence of English used among the girls in these digital spaces is evident. For example, they frequently shared images modified with English text on their Facebook pages. While shared content, such as pictures, videos, and music are reflective of the Burmese or Karen context, they are often modified and reproduced with English, either through addition of overlaid text or in the accompanying comments. They indicated that English made it easier to communicate with others who may not share their home language. For example, Mu Ka Paw La noted that English helped her talk with Burmese and Nepali friends: "cause I don't know their language" (interview, March 18, 2013). Love Each Day expressed a preference for English over Karen as it allowed her to "learn more English," noting that "if you use every day, it's good for you" (interview, April 24, 2013).

English allowed the girls to build connections in the translocal space that had been co-constructed with others who shared lived experiences and social contexts of displacement from Burma and resettlement in the United States, reflecting hybrid social and historical contexts. While English allowed greater connections in the translocal space, given the girls' physical location in the United States, it is important to highlight the impact of the American locality's institutionalized language ideologies in dominant discourses (Bartolome, 2008; Simpson & Mayr, 2010). These ideologies reflect the pressures on immigrant families to learn English as quickly as possible, while minoritized languages are frequently devalued and deemed unimportant and irrelevant for success in educational and personal pursuits. Consequently, many of the girls associated intelligence with English proficiency and expressed a need to learn more English to feel smart.

English dominance in digital spaces, as well as the Romanization of home languages in these spaces is a reflection of their American locality along with its sociopolitical histories that include dominant discourses and ideologies.

Literacy as a translocal practice in terms of language production then is a reflection of hybridized linguistic localities that are remixed in purposeful ways to reflect hybrid ways of being and knowing in digital spaces. These examples illustrate the ways in which girls resettled as refugees from the Thai/Burma border use language in literacy practices to build or maintain cultural, social, and linguistic connections in digital spaces. In their productions of translocality, their past experiences and knowledges are hybridized with current social practices, while also reflecting corresponding ideological pressures.

Translocal identity: Tete's multimodal travels

Building on theories of space and place as social and relational constructs, Appadurai's conceptualization of translocality is particularly useful for this study as it enables an understanding of how spaces are produced locally and globally in relation to a particular geographic location, without necessarily having direct ties to that location. In this study, translocality was produced in digital spaces by drawing on the real and imagined lived experiences the girls had in Thailand, in Burma or the Karen State, and the United States. They hybridized those experiences through literacy practices to produce translocality in digital spaces. Their productions of translocality were reflected in the girls' authoring processes, during which they authored themselves as translocal.

Translocality in the authoring processes was a response to a tension of the ways in which the girls were authored in the United States after resettlement and the ways in which these imposed identifications were negotiated and frequently reconfigured and resisted. Most of the time, they enacted their translocal identities through a simultaneous engagement with multiple cultures. These included explicit acknowledgements of their cultural belonging in relation to various spatial locations (e.g., Karen or Burmese) as well as their interests in global popular cultures (e.g., Korean, Thai, or Indian). These intersected with an identification of belonging to the US context, a culture of youth who were resettled to the country as refugees, and an implicit disassociation with being an American. Specifically, although the girls and their immediate social networks (community-based and virtual) acknowledged their locality in the United States, they frequently positioned or authored themselves as being immigrants or refugees in the broader US society. This was a reflection of the ways in which they were authored upon arriving. They were authored by various American institutions, including resettlement agencies, government organizations, and schools, as refugees, English learners, and foreigners who needed explicit instruction of the American culture. While these efforts were designed to make the transition process easier, they also implicitly authored the girls and their families as different and as lacking the appropriate types of knowledge. Within their physical and virtual communities, the girls learned how to navigate these authoring processes that ascribed requirements for belonging as well as found ways to author themselves in this new and challenging environment. Through their translocal authoring, they refused identifying with an American identity – an identity that excluded and devalued their own knowledges and experiences. Instead, they created translocal spaces

that allowed them to hybridize their complex ways of knowing and being across multiple global localities, including Thailand refugee camps, their US context, and various additional imagined localities, such as their families' roots in Burma or the Karen States as well as interest-driven locations around the globe, such as Korea and India. They used literacy as a tool to author themselves as translocal youth and built spaces in which their translocal knowledges and experiences were viewed as assets and not limitations.

To illustrate the authoring process in relation to the enactments of translocal identity, I draw on the case example of Tete Pasta, a 17-year-old Po Karen girl who had been in the United States for 4 years at the time of the study. She was born and raised in the Umphiem camp in Thailand. Her family fled Burma and lived in Thailand until 2009, when they were resettled to the United States. Tete was very outgoing and had many friends in the community, at school, and in digital spaces, with whom she communicated by using the Karen, Burmese, and English languages. When not spending time with her friends, she participated in digital spaces using her iPad. She was particularly fond of Korean dramas and spent much of her time watching and thinking about Korean dramas.

I engaged in four interviews with Tete during the study, and a follow-up interview in May 2014, for a total of nearly 5 hours of recorded conversations. During this time, she identified as (Po)Karen, as a refugee in the United States, and a fan of Korean popular culture. These spatial cultural identifications were reflected in her discussion of actual and imagined travels through multiple global localities, illustrating enactments of a hybrid translocal identity. Tete's daily literacy practices included active digital participation using her iPad or a computer. She was an active participant on Facebook and ooVoo, using these social networks to connect with friends in local and

geographically diverse locations. She also engaged with meaningful content through online communities that focused on Korean dramas. Her literacy practices in digital spaces supported her agency to enact this hybridized and spatially relational identity without needing to compartmentalize her belonging to multiple global localities. While these enactments were able to exist simultaneously in digital spaces, I will describe them individually below, before discussing how they intersect.

During my first interview with Tete, I asked her where she was from. After noting that she was from Thailand, she said "do you want to see my camp?" I said I would, and we used my phone to search for images of the Umphiem refugee camp. Literacy served as a tool to transform our interview by adding an instant visual dimension that supported Tete's narrative about her childhood. As we talked, Tete showed me snapshots that illustrated the context of her upbringing, ranging from the hills around the camp, the outdoor areas, as well as the bamboo-houses in which she and other displaced people lived. The Thai government treated refugee camps as temporary settings for refugees, so it provided basic materials for people to construct their own temporary shelters. As Tete showed me the houses, and talked about their poor construction and leaky roofs, she also discussed how these houses were built (Interview, April 1, 2013):

D: You had to build your house?

T: Yea, we had to build our house. Everyone help each other, and, even like bathroom, you had to make by yourself. They go inside and make the big hole, and those people give you that thing, but not like this bathroom, but some people use the bathroom like that, you had to put water like that…

D: Cause it doesn't have something to take it away?

T: Yea, it is a lot different. When we live there, like, we had to, when we cook, we have to make fire. And here we just turn on the gas… (laughing)

D: Yea, it's easier right?

T: Yea. But some people, if they live in the city, like town, like the, … here, when they live… there, it look like here. They don't cook like out, because it is a lot of power, like power, like that. But where we live, we don't have power. We just use candle, when we study, we use candle too.

Having instant access to the wealth of images that illustrated the context of Tete's narrative, allowed her to show me, and not just tell me, about her experiences in Thailand. By using digital literacy in this interview setting, Tete constructed a translocal space for our interview and simultaneously enacted a translocal identity – she was "here," in the United States, but also "there" in the Umphiem camp. She embodied these experiences and used digital tools to enact and illustrate snapshots of these embodied ways of knowing and being. Her translocal enactment also reflected an understanding of different power relations and possibilities the two localities afforded.

Although Tete identified as Po Karen – one of the many ethnic groups that constitute the broader Karen group – she also identified as Karen. This was mainly due to the fact that she did not know many Po Karen people, so she adopted the broader ethnic categorization. Her enactments were carried out through visual semiotic modes. She frequently shared images that demonstrated her identity enactments. For example, Tete would frequently share pictures of herself wearing traditional Karen clothing – something that she was not wearing on a typical basis. These photographs would often be posted as her profile pictures on Facebook. In one of the photos, she wore a traditional peach

colored dress and posed in front of a Karen flag, while making a peace sign with her fingers. In another photograph, taken before a school cultural celebration, she wore white Karen clothes, embroidered with red designs, while also making a peace sign with her fingers. Through these self-portraits, she explicitly enacts an identity of Karen identification and cultural belonging by identifying with traditional symbols of Karen ethnicity – clothing and national flag. However, she also uses images to identify with a broader Karen community in the United States by sharing photographs of her participation in community events, such as dances, as well as to signify her membership digitally by creating multimodal compositions that reflect this belonging. For example, she created a composite image that consists of 12 individual portraits, including herself and 11 of her friends. These photographs are arranged around a Karen flag, which is placed in the Center. Overlaid on top is the text "KSS," representing Karen Students of "State" (changed to preserve anonymity).

While she was strongly connected to her (Po)Karen cultural identity, she was also highly engaged in Korean popular culture. She was always a fan of movies and popular culture. While she lived in the Umphiem camp, she would sneak to her wealthier neighbor's house and watch movies through a hole in the wall, because the neighbor charged people to show the movies (Interview, April 1, 2013).

T: No, like my neighbor, like, she had video, and she said, something… she always talking about my mom. Then I'm always sad, but I don't tell her like that.

D: So does she ever let you watch it, watch videos there

T: If we go watch it, we had to pay it.

D: Seriously?

T: Yea, like one person, kid, like one bat, but the, older adult, like that, 2 dollar, one DVDs, like 2 dollars, and two DVDs, like three dollar.

D: And you would go to like a store and rent them?

T: Yea, they just had the movie thing, but when we didn't have money, we go and watch in the hole like that (laughing), and we watch that.

After moving to the United States, Tete was able to develop her interest in movies by exploring additional content that was available for free online. In particular, she developed an affinity for Korean popular culture, including movies and television shows. This affinity was evident in all of the interviews – popular Korean content was her primary source of entertainment during her free time. She streamed this content on her iPad by accessing Korean drama websites viki.com and DramaFever.com. She particularly enjoyed the topics and characters of Korean dramas, which also allowed her to temporarily escape her everyday reality (Multimodal Interview, July 17, 2013):

D: So why do you like watching movies?

T: Sometime when I have something wrong with me, or something like that, I just want to watch movie. It is better.

D: And why is it better?

T: When I'm thinking something, or something wrong, or something like that, I think if I can watch movie, it's all, everything gone.

D: Yea.

T: I don't have nothing to think, I just watch movie, thinking about movie

In addition, these dramas also allowed her a way to explore other identities and imagine possibilities of a different life. She indicated that she liked Korean people: "because like,... I like... Someday, sometimes, I want to be friends with them. Know each other. Just like... Not like boyfriend or something like that. I just want to know them and be friends like, close, like that. I just want like that" (interview, May 23, 2013). However, she also enjoyed the romantic plotlines and even explored the connections by writing short fan fiction in the form of letters to actors in these dramas (interview, May 23, 2013):

T: Like sometime, when I'm lazy, I'm just writing... Like I write about... I write like about.... ... Love. And like, about someone... Like that. I just watch movie, and sometime I think about them and I just write a letter, or like that.

D: And you write it... Where do you write it?

T: I just, just write down, like some people say like, you crazy. Like I'm crazy. Because, the Korea drama guy... uh... acctric... or I don't know, he's a Korea guy that become like... He so handsome (giggle). I like him, the way he smiled, and he had eye, and he good like that (giggle). Like the song is so good that way.

D: Aha

T: I just write a love letter. And like some letter, yeah.

D: Do you send it to the guy?

T: Nooo. I just share with my friend.

Tete wrote these letters in a composition book, which allowed her to use literacy to imagine romantic relationships, which were not possible and strongly discouraged in her

daily life. Her family imposed strict rules for her behavior and did not allow her to date. She negotiated these expectations by enacting imaginative identities through literacy practices.

Her interests in Korean dramas extended to social media spaces, where she would share links to particular shows, as well as post comments in response to the plots. These comments were often shared without context, such as writing: "wow he dad turn alive again" in reference to a drama in which the father figure is a monster (Facebook post, May 18, 2013).

Tete's literacy practices around Korean dramas provided another dimension to her spatially relational, or translocal identity. This identity was also situated in the American context, which allowed her access to these various forms of global identification available through interest and access she had to affinity spaces (Gee, 2012). But it also created possibilities to imagine global belonging that extended beyond ethnic or locational belonging. Living in the United States, Tete understood that her life had greater opportunities, while understanding at the same time that she was positioned as a foreigner, a refugee. For example, during our member check meeting in May 2014, she indicated that she and other refugee students were often discriminated against in her school by their teachers, such as being penalized for errors in their driving class, while white students were not. Digital literacy served as a traveling tool, allowing her to explore other worlds and locations that were not accessible to her in otherwise everyday experiences.

Dialogic construction of digital expertise: "But when you see it - it's a health class!"

Although multimodal literacy is not a new phenomenon (Thomas et al., 2007), recent growth in digitally mediated literacy practices has provided opportunities for new ways of integrating multiple semiotic modes (Gee, 2003; Hull & Nelson, 2005; Kress, 2003). This calls for complicating the understanding of how textual representation is organized, from more linear and static to more dynamic and fluid, requiring different skills for interaction, organization, and production of digitally mediated meaning. It is important to note that digital multimodal literacy practices are comprised not only of new technical tools, but include new organizational principles for meaning making, which privilege participation, collaboration, and distributed knowledge (Knobel & Lankshear, 2007). As such, digital technology has provided the tools that support a dynamic new ethos in literacy practices, which is collaborative and decentralized.

In this study, digital spaces provided the girls opportunities to co-construct knowledge. Moreover, through collaboration, the girls became active participants in digital spaces, which allowed them to enact different forms of technical expertise, and thus author themselves as digital experts. They enacted this expertise by illustrating their technical skills through social media use, multimodal composing, and account management, as well as their social and cultural understanding through self-representation and privacy management. The following examples will illustrate how the girls garnered their collaborative digital skills in order to author themselves as digital experts, across technical and social realms of digital technology.

Social media use

As illustrated in Chapter 5, the girls were active participants in social media spaces, but they primarily participated on Facebook, YouTube, and ooVoo. The complexity of the girls' engagement with Facebook extended from communication with friends to production and sharing of multimodal images. For example, Win Lay often used Facebook to share multimodal images she composed. She frequently shared collages composed of various self-portraits, or selfies, with different facial expressions or hand gestures, modifying each with text to express her feelings at that particular moment. In these multimodal compositions, she was aware of the complex ways in which images and text communicate meaning, while also making these messages highly personal by including her own expressions. In addition to Facebook, the girls also used ooVoo, which they call "oVo"—a digital application that allows up to 12 people to simultaneously connect through video and text chat. Participants used it to chat and joke with their friends and family members, as well as friends made in virtual settings.

Social media participation was an important daily activity for all of the girls. They were all familiar with intricacies of the different networks, which they learned through social interaction with other youth. For example, most expressed that they had a friend set up their accounts, expertise they were then willing to share with others to broaden their networks. For example, when I indicated that I did not have an ooVoo account, Love Each Day encouraged me to set one up during our interview (04/24/13).

LED: I have in my iPhone. Do you have OVO?

D: No I don't

LED: Noo?! Download it! It easy. Here, OVO right. This one. [Showing the app on her iPhone]

D: Okay. It's an app?

LED: Yea, here, my friend. [Showing her list of friends]

D: Oh wow!

LED: See, my friend.

D: How many friends do you have?

LED: Um... 20 some. My friend, my friend friend, they have a lot. They have 100 some. I was like oh my God.

D: Let me see if I can find it. OVO. So, I heard some bad stuff about it so I was a little scared to get it.

LED: OVO? You mean OVO?

D: Aha

LED: Nothing's bad

D: So you don't know any bad things about it?

LED: No

D: That's good. ... Yeah I guess if people try to talk to you and they're not your friends…

LED: They add me but, but I don't add them back.

D: So you just don't talk to them if they do, right?

LED: Mmhmm. You download?

D: I'm gonna download it right now

LED: You make one?

D: I'm doing it right now.

LED: I know, but do you make one. Do you have a password, no?

D: Not yet

LED: Not yet!? You have to do it now.

D: Aha

LED: Uhhhh. That's so funny.

D: Why?

LED: I don't know….

D: Why not?

LED: You never used before, no?

D: No

LED: Okay okay, just download it.

D: What do I need to know?

LED: I don't know just like, like OVO, you call and you can see your face and my face and just like a Facebook. Aha just something you text and you call.

D: That's gonna take a while. So can you chat on it?

LED: Yeah, you can text, you can do everything.

D: Okay. And do all of your friends use it?

LED: Aha. They all use it. And the first time I didn't know, but they told me. I make it up.

After my file finished downloading, and after we concluded the interview, Love Each Day showed me how to set up my account, change my profile picture, and add friends.

As an example, she took a picture of the wall of the room in which we were meeting and set it as my profile, telling me that I could change it later. She also changed my status to say "love" and showed me how to change my availability that would allow others to contact me, by choosing to indicate whether I was "online" or "invisible."

As the previous excerpt from the interview with Love Each Day illustrates, social media participation was a collaborative engagement – not only in its intended sense in which people develop social connections in digital settings, but also in the process of learning how to use social media. For example, Love Each Day indicates that she worked with a friend to set up oVo, but then she used this interview opportunity to sign me up for this social network. She also demonstrated that she developed a number of other skills through her participation in this social media setting. In addition to collaborative meaning making and learning how to establish connections; Love Each Day and the other participants also learned the types of meanings that are understood in particular settings and by particular people, different genres of writing and styles, multimodal meaning production and composition, accessing of meaningful content and applications, online privacy and safety, and multilingual language development.

Multimodal meaning production and composition

The girls in this study used the social media spaces to produce and share multimodal content. The tools that the girls used to produce meaning allowed them to modify content in ways that they found meaningful, but they also encouraged a development of design skills, such as an understanding of color, layout, and photo properties. These compositions often included a combination of visual content, such as

photographs, with texts. In fact, photography was an essential skill that underpinned the girls' multimodal composition. However, while photographs are often considered static, as part of the girls' broader multimodal practices, photographs were constructed relationally. At times, they were used more traditionally, such as for remembering and commemorating special moments. For example, Elizabeth used her Facebook account to store her photos. She had hundreds of photographs uploaded to Facebook, but she was the only person who was able to view them. These photos included snapshots of her time with family and friends who lived far away, along with pictures of her childhood, and first moments after resettling in the United States. For others, photographs were used strategically to construct a particular image of the self. When they were no longer useful, or no longer served the purpose of their image construction, they were deleted from social media spaces. For example, during our multimodal interview, Yoo Na deleted many of her photos from Facebook because she did not want them anymore. Rainbow and Tait also frequently deleted photos, while maintaining only the most recent ones they liked.

The photographs shared were frequently modified, by for example changing the colors, tone, or shape of an image, or by combining multiple images to communicate meaning. The girls relied on a variety of apps to allow them to make modifications and used social networks as a venue on which they could share their compositions. For example, Elizabeth had four apps on her phone that allowed her to edit images, including DecoAlbum, SmilePhoto, moreBeaute2, and DecoBlend. The photographs were often taken by the girls themselves and then modified visually and textually. For example, Tait frequently changed her profile pictures and used apps to modify the way her pictures

looked, such as evening out or lightening her skin tone or blurring out the background to focus on her face. She explained this process in an interview (04/18/13):

D: So what does that... When you post a new picture, why do you change your picture and what does the picture say about [

T: Well,... Like, same picture every time is boring. And when, when I change like new style, and new... How like, ... I fixed my photo too. So it don't look exactly... It's prettier [laughing]. And I change the style, like... I look, like when you don't know me outside, you gonna think I'm really hot on Facebook. And you gonna think I'm a lot older than I am now. [Laughing]. I... I kind of look like... like.. I don't know, like, really cool, you know?

Here she indicates that she "fixes" her photos to make herself look "hot" and "really cool" in the digital space, which she perceived as different from the way that she looks in real, "outside" life. This process of modifying the photos resulted in images that looked airbrushed – they typically reflected a soft blur on the faces, thereby removing any blemishes on the skin and evening out the skin tone. Her editing of photos was often a point of contention with Win Lay, who would accuse her as well as Rainbow of using too much "kala," or lighter color, in her images. Rainbow explained,

R: You know like, when I take picture, I put more like white color, like, mmhmm. In our language, she call Kala. Kala means like a lot of white.

D: Okay.

R: It filter that I put.

Here Rainbow demonstrates not only her purposeful editing of how she looked in photographs, but also her technical understanding of tools like photo filters that modify

image representation. However, this also points to a response to racialized experiences following resettlement, whereby many Southeast Asian students are authored as foreigners by the dominant society through racism and discrimination (Ngo, 2006; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Ong et al., 1996). It is also a reflection of global colonial discourses of beauty that are associated with light skin tones (Li, Min, Belk, Kimura & Bahl, 2008).

When I asked the girls about photo lightening, they did not discuss racialized beauty discourses. Instead, they ascribed their friend's negative comments to jealousy and competition. Although they did not explicitly discuss it, this example illustrates how the tension between the girls regarding their own representation pointed to a struggle with the process of racialization following resettlement. In particular, this example illustrates the complexity of authoring processes – the girls were authored by the dominant society as the immigrant "other" to which they responded by playing with representation. As a result, some friends authored them as cute or beautiful, but other friends authored them as inauthentic. Thus, this representational play in an authoring process provided opportunities for the girls to engage with the racialization process dialogically, while showing agency by expressing the importance of having the ability to control how they are portrayed and discuss how they are perceived. Even though they did not discuss the racialization processes explicitly, they were in the evolving process of engaging with these processes by actively negotiating multiple discourses regarding race and representation through multimodal literacies in digital spaces.

Although many of the shared images were modified by text in the comments sections by the poster, as well as by her friends, some were also modified with text directly through the use of apps. Similar apps that allowed one to change how a portrait

looked also often allowed a user to modify the image with text. The results frequently demonstrated the girls' feelings at a particular moment. Win Lay for example frequently shared images in which she combined multiple selfies, or self portraits, featuring different expressions. Underneath each image, she would add text that illustrates what she was feeling in the particular image. Combined, the images and the text produced meanings that conveyed her intended messages. For example, in one of these multimodal compositions, she combined four images, and overlaid the following text, (1) "Ayyyee!!", (2) "Friend!", (3) "Because I'm NOt The Only Muslim That Says Bad Word . . . : (" (4) "Please Don't Call Me That I'm Not Muslim. It Hurt alot . . ." Through this composition, she authored herself as an expert in digital editing as well as multimodal composing, while also enacting an identity of a Muslim girl, despite her use of "bad words."

Online privacy and safety management

Online privacy is an important concern and the girls in this study managed their online information and their privacy with great awareness. For example, although Love Each Day indicated that there was "nothing bad" happening on networks like oVo, she did note that this was due to her selective use of this network. She was only willing to connect with those people who she knew, which resulted in her having fewer friends than some of her other friends who had a hundred connections or more. Other girls expressed different ways in which they understood privacy and ways in which they sought to maintain it by managing their online presence. The management of privacy can be categorized by representations of self, connections with others, and account management.

Representations of self

All of the girls were very cautious in the ways in which they represented themselves on social networks. The level of anonymity allowed on social networks was indicated as important to the girls, given the exposure and active involvement in connection building in which real-life friendship was not the primary basis for their establishment. Most of the girls did not use their real names in their social media profiles. Instead, they used names that represented, for example a favorite snack (Rainbow), ethnic identity (Elizabeth), or a liked combination of words (Mu Ka Paw La). When asked why they did not use their real names, most of the girls responded that they didn't want people to find them. Table 8 illustrates how the girls managed their online presence. Although they would often use pseudonyms for their accounts, some of the girls also avoided sharing photographs of themselves on their profile images. Elizabeth and Mu Ka Paw La were the most cautious at the time and they never used their own photos as their profile

Table 8
Participants' online presence management

Name (pseudonym)	Real name on social networks	Profile photo of self (shared publically)	Photos of self elsewhere (public and private)
Elizabeth	Sometimes	No	Yes (but mostly not shared publically)
Love Each Day	Yes (modified)	Sometimes	Yes
Mu Ka Paw La	No	No	Yes (very limited, typically private)
Rainbow	No	Yes	Yes
Tait	No	Yes	Yes
Tete Pasta	No	Yes	Yes
Than Moe Aye	Sometimes	Yes	Yes
Win Lay	No	Yes	Yes
Yoo Na	No	Sometimes	Yes (but not shared publically)

pictures, using other graphics and images instead. However, they both had photos posted on their walls, but these photos were only visible to their Facebook friends and not the public. Love Each Day and Yoo Na occasionally shared their own photos on their profile, while others did so more frequently. For them, sharing images, while protecting names and other personal information, allowed the girls to make connections with others – signaling their age, gender, as well as popularity and desirability.

(Re)building connections

For all of the girls, social media spaces allowed them to establish or rebuild connections with other youth locally and globally. These connections allowed the girls to negotiate their hybrid experiences following resettlement and as such, required management of global and local privacy. Although they had many diverse friends, most of their connections were with youth who shared elements of their cultural or linguistic backgrounds. Most of the girls had friends who were living in various states in the United States but had refugee backgrounds. However, some, like Tete, were connected to people in Burma or friends who lived in other countries as refugees. Thus they were able to broaden their immediate social networks of people who share their language and elements of lived experience. To manage privacy on a more global scale, most of the girls were selective in terms of who they accepted to be their friend in social media settings, like Facebook or ooVoo. Some however, like Win Lay, accepted all requests, but continued to maintain their privacy through anonymity and protection of personal information.

These connections were maintained privately and publically. For example, ooVoo and Facebook messenger allow people's conversations to be visible only to participants in the conversation. However Facebook walls are more public, to the extent of the ways in which privacy settings are managed and applied. To maintain privacy in the public settings, the girls would often share inside jokes or hidden messages. For example, Tete frequently referred to listening to hip-hop at home. When I asked her about what type of hip-hop she was listening to, she said that it was a code word for her mom talking or chastising her. All of her friends, who needed to know, knew the meaning of hip-hop in this situation. By using code words, the girls managed their local privacy to ensure that unnecessary information would not be passed on to their local community, such as their parents or their parents' friends.

Navigating gendered safety concerns

The girls' awareness of privacy, as well as their desire for anonymity was often a result of their desire for safety. For example, Mu Ka Paw La explained in her digital interview why she doesn't post her real information:

M: I didn't put my picture.

D: You don't put your own picture?

M: No. I put like cartoon picture.

D: Why do you do that?

M: Because when people, when I put my picture, people know then that I am me. (giggle).

D: Oh

M: So I don't want to.

D: And you don't have your real name, right?

M: Mm-mm

D: So is that for the same reason?

M: ... Yea.

D: So people can't find you?

M: Yea

D: Why don't you want people to find you?

M: I don't know. They crazy. Or they weird (giggle).

Mu Ka Paw La explained that using a different name would not allow strangers to find her, something that other girls pointed out as a concern. Although many indicated that they chatted with others online, they also pointed out that this could be problematic at times. The issues they raised were generally related to their position as girls, as their concerns often reflected other young (and old) men contacting them. For example, Tait discussed the ways in which some of the young men she chatted with exposed their genitalia on oVo (04/18/13):

T: All the girl who are online, this thing, mostly, like 99% have seen it.

D: It? You're talking about *it*. Okay [laughing]

T: [laughing]

D: That's crazy. So where are these guys... are these guys here, or

T: I don't know! They're in the US. Sometime, some are from Burma, but they don't really do it.

D: And they're usually Burmese guys?

T: Not Burmese, like different, from like Asia or Africa, they do it. But not American. I've never seen American. I saw the one was Karenni or Karen.

D: Okay

...

T: But when you see it - it's a health class!

D: [laughing]

T: [laughing] It's more than health class. It's like a medical doctor education, or whatever.

Tait also indicated that the men often asked the young women to get nude on camera, while conversations between men would sometimes get violent. I asked her how people knew that they were talking to a girl or a guy, and she pointed out that ooVoo requires its users to indicate their gender, which is then displayed for others to see:

T: Because in my account, it's female, so...

D: Okay

T: If I change to male, the guy would start swearing at me

D: Ohh

T: Because like, guy, guy, when they meet - damn! Some guy, they show a gun, at the other guy

D: On the screen?!

T: Yeah! “What do you want?!”

D: That's weird

T: And the guy like "I'm not scared of you." And the other guy like "give me your address, and I would just come and kill you."

While other girls did not provide specific details about their negative experiences on social media applications, many indicated that there is "bad stuff" that can take place on these networks, and particularly ooVoo. However, as the final line in the previous excerpt indicates, the girls were also often asked for their addresses. For example, Tait had an online boyfriend who lived in another state who wanted to come and visit her, as did Yoo Na. All indicated that they did not share their addresses with strangers they met online.

Although the girls' responses were in response to challenges perpetuated through modern technological advances, their cautious privacy management was also reflective of exploitative violence directed toward young women and girls of color. Historically, colonial encounters were sexually exploitative, in which women were represented as sexually insatiable objects of desire and fantasy (Loomba, 1998). This historical colonial context frames current practices that continue to promote violence against women through sex trafficking, sex tourism, and discursive eroticization. Thus, it is important to consider the girls' representation management in relation to these historical contextual frames. Their identity enactments as managers of their online safety illustrate agency in negotiating and refusing the authoring impositions that position them as objects of desire.

Account management

The girls exhibited an in-depth knowledge and awareness of all of the technical ways in which they could manage their accounts. For example, they knew how to ensure that their information was not available publicly and were able to monitor who had access to their information. All had private Facebook accounts and their information was only available to their friends, or at times, only to themselves. Also, many of the girls had

multiple accounts in social media, and Facebook in particular and thus were able to manage their privacy across these multiple profiles. Although they knew *how* to manage their accounts and protect their privacy from strangers and parents or older community members, most of the girls trusted their friends and siblings with their private information, such as logins and passwords. This sometimes resulted in unwanted consequences, such as for example having unwanted photographs posted. For example, Win Lay posted a photo of Rainbow, to which Rainbow responded with four separate comments within one minute:

1) allah why yu post that spic

2) OMG

3) please deletes all pic thats yu post naw

4 i take fro fun not for post on FB

Here Rainbow indicated that there were only some photographs that were meant for Facebook sharing, and this particular one was not one of them. Similarly, Than Moe Aye faced challenges of having a locked account because her boyfriend changed her password and would not tell her the new password.

Through collaboration with other youth, the girls developed skills that were expected for full participation in online spaces. These included multimodal composing as well as navigation of digital spaces in ways that fostered connections to meaningful people and contexts. The ways in which the girls negotiated their digital expert identity also illustrate complex ways in which they were authoring themselves in response to the ways in which they were authored by others. As girls, they were often sexualized by

other boys and men, which led them to develop their digital skills in ways that maintained their safety, while allowing them to participate in digital spaces meaningfully.

True Fun Stars: Authoring as a girl in local and global power contexts

Women and girls who are forced to leave their homes are frequently authored as refugees, victims, and targets of oppressive and violent regimes. While these representations often reflect the realities of many women's lived experiences, they are frequently imposed on these women in a simplified and homogenized manner. In reality, those experiences may define only a portion of much more complex, heterogeneous, and dynamic identities. And, what it means to be a "refugee woman" is likely very different from what it may mean to be a woman, or a girl, with a refugee background.

The girls in this study used multimodal literacy practices to enact an understanding of what being a girl with a refugee background means to them. Their refugee experiences were often not foregrounded, but were integrated in the broader authoring process that acknowledges the girls' histories, lived and/or imagined. As part of the dialogic authoring process, the girls' identity enactments reflected hybrid and intersectional gendered identities. All nine participants identified as "girls" and not women, or young women. They all held either implicit or explicit understandings of what being a girl meant, and to many, this identity was positioned dichotomously against a "boy/guy" identity. Although they all identified as "girls," the ways in which they did so differed. For example, some identified as respectful, helpful, interested in boys, "playgirls," good girls, BFFs (best friends forever), funny, tough, or as "stupid" (meaning

silly). Many also identified as being "kids," while recognizing that they were maturing into young adults. Adulthood, for most, was associated with marriage, and many of the girls identified that they had peers who were already married and have had children. Most of the girls enjoyed being "single," or unmarried, even if they had boyfriends in physical or virtual spaces. Multimodal literacy practices enabled the girls' to enact their gender identities in multiple ways, while negotiating the social and political contexts in which their enactments took place.

To illustrate the authoring process in relation to gender identity, I will provide an example of a group of participants who identified as a group called "True Fun Stars." The group consisted of four of the participants, Tait, Rainbow, Than Moe Aye, and Win Lay, as described in the following example from my first interview with Rainbow on March 28, 2013:

R: Like we have four friends, we named it true fun stars. Yeah. That's the best. All girls. True fun stars girls. Tait, Win Lay, Than Moe Aye, and me. We're best friends.

D: Okay. That's really cool

R: Mmmhmm. Yeah, some people don't like us because we joke a lot. And we live like we're best, and we're stars, (giggle), we're fun, that's why we're named...

D: Good. So what do you guys do together?

R: Sometime, like when we heard assembly, or party, we practice dancing, and when we get there, we put the song on and dance.

D: Cool

R: When we do something, we call like, we meet, like what we're gonna do,... If we're planning together, not only one, we call like four friends and we together.

D: So the four of you hanging out together at the same time? That's cool. And you are all different ages, right?

R: Yea, Tait is oldest.

D: Oh is she?

R: Yeah she's like 17. And Than Moe Aye is... 17, but she's like a month older. Yeah. And Win Lay, she's like 14, I'm 15. So Tait and Than Moe Aye, they're oldest.

D: Do they act like they're older?

R: No.... They act like they're 12. (Laughing). I act like I'm older... and I hate them. (Laughing)

D: You are the most mature one? (Laughing)

R: Aha. I'm like the star. Yeah.

D: So what does it mean to be a star?

R: Like, like true mean, like we don't lie, we say true everything, we're the... uh, yea. And fun mean, like, we're having fun every day, we laugh. Star is like, you know online, we joke a lot about people, and people like us, and they make friend. Yeah they add friend.

D: So it means that you're popular?

R: Yeah

Rainbow was the first of the girls to introduce me to True Fun Stars, but as I talked with the other three girls, they also discussed being members of the group.

Through observation and document examples, I soon noticed that this group identification was fostered in online spaces as well as within the community. The group provided the girls a community that was supportive and understanding. They drew on this support to protect each other, whether through literacy practices in digital spaces or verbally in physical spaces. For example, when someone shared a photo composition on Facebook where Win Lay was superimposed next to a boy, Win Lay came to Tait for support, as Tait described in the following interview excerpt:

T: Oh like one time, Win Lay fight, our group, TFS, like they don't like somebody, they have their own group. They don't like us. They don't like TFS. "You girls suck" they say.

D: Oh wow.

T: Who cares! And Win Lay and another guy, they fight. Those stuff. And they do something to Win Lay. They take Win Lay picture, and…, the man thing, and they combine it together.

D: Ohhh

T: Like side-by-side. And they posted like on the portfolio picture or something.

D: Oh noo

T: And then Win Lay got pissed.

D: Well, yea

T: And she was like, the one who swear a lot, so she start fighting, and then she got tired of it, so she come told me something "you know those guy, you should help me." TFS, you know? We help each other. "okay." Cool okay. And

she called me, this time, and the guy was there, and I start swearing. (Tait interview, April 18, 2013)

Playgirls: digital spaces as "free" spaces

Although the girls supported each other in digital and physical spaces, they were also living within the norms and behavioral expectations of each space. Digital spaces allowed them freedom and flexibility to try out different identities, such as being "playgirls," which were not possible to the same extent in physical, community and home spaces. While Than Moe Aye identified as half Karen and half Burmese, Tait, Rainbow, and Win Lay identified as Burmese Muslim girls. They observed major Muslim holidays and customs, such as Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha and were aware of the cultural expectations for Muslim girls in their communities. The girls often made references to being Muslim on social media, as well as responses to those who accused them of not being good Muslims. In addition, even though they did not wear the hijab in public, the three girls would wear it during holidays and would also share images on social media to proudly identify as Muslim girls by captioning their images in ways that demonstrate this identification (e.g., "Muslim girls"). This was unique to the digital spaces, because the girls did not feel comfortable enacting this identity in public and away from their community. For example, Rainbow indicated that she stopped wearing the hijab after she resettled to the United States. She noted:

R: Every day, when I go to school, my mom says "why don't you wear the hijab?" And I say "I don't feel good. It's so hot." For me, yeah. When I come home, I pray. She says okay.

D: So you wear when you pray?

R: Mmhmmm

...

D: Um, so did you wear the hijab before you came here?

R: Yeah

D: So when you came here...

R: In Thai, I never take it off. When I was like, uh, four.... I wear, wear, wear, and like, but a shower (giggle), I wear and wear. But when I came to America, and people look at me, and I was like 10, not 10 like 11, and I walk outside, and they look at me, and I don't feel good. So I took it off.

D: So it was your decision?

R: Mmhmmm

During my observations at the community center, I had only seen Rainbow wear the hijab once – during a holiday celebration. The girls' locality within the United States, where dominant discourses frequently portray Muslims as violent, and Muslim women and girls in particular as oppressed, provided the contextual frame for Rainbow's decision. This context is situated in a colonial history in which veiled women are/were eroticized, while at the same time eliciting pity and savior desires (Loomba, 1998; Spivak, 1988). By removing the hijab in public spaces, Rainbow demonstrated not only the struggle with these colonizing discourses, but also agency that illustrated an active decision to not wear the hijab – a choice that these dominant discourses frequently negate. She, along with other TFS girls, demonstrated that there are multiple ways to be a Muslim girl, refusing homogenizing discourses of victimized Muslim women and girls.

The girls prided themselves on being "playgirls." Akin to a playboy, a playgirl was a young woman who "played boys" by having multiple relationships at the same time. The girls identified that they had relationships with boys and young men across the country. For example, at the beginning of the study, Tait had "boyfriends" in at least three states and she nurtured these relationships online. For Tait, and many of the other Burmese Muslim girls in the community, digital spaces were free places, as they allowed interactions not possible or encouraged in daily lived experiences. As Burmese girls (Muslim or otherwise) were not allowed to date, or even interact with other boys in person, they found ways to do so in digital settings through multimodal literacy practices. Digital settings frequently lacked parental and adult monitoring, which was a salient characteristic of their daily life offline. For example, the girls identified that families and community members monitored their daily activities based on gendered norms and expectations for behavior. Their school and the community center also imposed particular rules of behavior, such as forbidding access to social media sites and speaking English only. In digital spaces however, through identity enactments, the four girls were able to negotiate these complex power relationships on their own terms. The adults in their community and at home were not engaged in social media spaces, and were unaware of their digital identity enactments. The digital space of authoring was thus not monitored, allowing the girls to try out and enact various hybrid identities, such as being a playgirl.

The TFS split: Gender and multiaxial locationality

Although the girls were able to "play" with identities and relationships in digital spaces, in community settings it became increasingly difficult to manage the behavioral

expectations for ways in which girls should behave. This tension between these multiple relational spaces was reflected in a split of the True Fun Stars group, which was announced on Facebook. During this split, the two girls who were authored as "stars" were excluded from the group, which was renamed to "TFez." Tait and Rainbow, who authored themselves as True and Fun, shared an image on June 7, 2013 that included the text TF'ez = TRUEFUN'Ez with the caption "TFS is updated to TF'ez..lol..still cool as always.." During our multimodal interview, I asked Rainbow to tell me more about the group disintegration:

D: So, TFS doesn't ... exist anymore? is it just TF now?

R: Yea. Cause we taken out Win Lay, cause she's so mean.

D: Yea?

R: But you know, TFS, we have four, four name. TFS girl. Than Moe Aye, she get a lot of boys, so she hang out. We don't like. So... yea. And Win Lay, she's mean, she swear a lot. English. So we don't like her.

D: Okay.

R: So me, and only Tait. This one is true, this one is fun, and it's True Fun.

(Rainbow, Multimodal Interview, July 18, 2013)

The production of the text that indicated the disintegration of TFS reflected a process of self-authoring. This authoring process reflected a shift in identity, which was enacted through multimodal literacy on Facebook. This enactment was situated in a very complex sociopolitical and historical context. A critical analysis of this context allows for a better understanding of the ways in which power intersects with the young girls' literacy practices. It is helpful to consider the various social power elements that impact

discourses and the impact that the girls' activities have on the overall power structures in their social worlds.

For a deeper understanding of the sociopolitical contexts that provide complexity to these texts, it is helpful to draw from feminist postcolonial perspectives and consider the young women's multiaxial locationalities (Brah, 2003). These locationalities account for various physical or imagined locations across multiple discourses, ideologies, and legacies of power. Thus, the young women embody and enact different, and at times contradicting, positions, depending on their relation to a particular context. These multilayered contexts result from their translocal lived experiences.

The primary elements of power negotiation in this study include gender norms and expectations. The girls' families and the broader community have established norms and expectations for behavior among girls. Based on my observations, as well as interviews, the expectation for girls in this housing community was to remain indoors when not in school, help with housework and/or sibling childcare, and avoid socialization with boys. The following excerpt from an interview with Rainbow, to which she invited Win Lay, illustrates these social expectations.

D: Um. so what does it mean to be beautiful?

R: Beautiful?

D: Mmhmm

R: ...

W: So people likes you. Add you. Can be friends with you.

R: Shut up

W: I answer for her

R: Yeah like... ... Like, when people beautiful, they think you're pretty. And you, you know... you, stay home and like. In my people, they think the prettiest, most beautiful girl, like, you stay home and, you do.... good stuff.

W: Housework

D: Housework?

W: Help your mom.

R: Yeah, and you don't go outside.

D: Okay

R: And you don't talk with boys

W: Mmmmmm

R: In ours, it's beautiful.

D: And is that the same for boys and girls?

R: Kind of, yea.

D: Are boys supposed to stay at home?

R: No! (Laughing) they always outside! Plays soccer, everything.

W: They're supposed to stay at home, but only if they want to.

D: Okay. So the parents usually don't make them stay home?

W: No. Like. ..

R: They're annoying...

W: It doesn't mean when you go outside, it doesn't mean that you're bad.

D: If you're a boy? Or a girl?

W: Both!

D: If you're a girl too?

R: Mmhmm

W: But at night it's like kind of bad. People see.

D: But during the day it's okay?

W: Mmhmm

Although the girls were aware of these expectations, they resisted them. They went out to play and hang out with their friends, while maintaining a level of control that adhered to their community expectations. This included not going out at night ("people see"), as well as not talking to boys too much. However, they used the digital space to negotiate and push the limits of these expectations. They frequently chatted with boys online and had many boyfriends in digital spaces.

During interviews, the girls also identified several layers of surveillance in their daily lives following resettlement. These included surveillance at home, where families monitored and limited their daily public (nondigital) activities, such as talking to boys. It also included their schools and the community center, which imposed particular rules of behavior, such as forbidding access to social media sites and speaking English only, as well as the broader social context where they felt uncomfortable wearing the hijab (a veil worn by some Muslim women), and ultimately chose not to wear it in public.

Digital spaces were free of adult supervision as none of their parents were active in social media spaces. They were also supportive of their religious background, as most of their friends in digital spaces were also Muslim. Thus these spaces were enabling them to push and manipulate boundaries through language and digital multimodal literacies in ways that were dynamic, flexible, and safe. In these spaces, they felt free to share self-representations that depicted their multiaxial and translocal positions. For example,

Rainbow would share selfies that ranged from standard pictures of her smiling, to pictures where she is wearing the hijab, to pictures in which she looks angry and is gesturing with her middle finger. However, while public discourses in digital spaces were more free and dynamic, they were also situated within private discourses of home and community, which imposed strict norms for behavioral appropriateness. These ideological flows are reflected in the girls' cultural resources that guided the processes of meaning production in digital spaces.

While they disliked forms of control and surveillance, Tait and Rainbow expressed how they engage in surveillance of self and others by reframing some of the same standards. For example, even though both Tait and Rainbow identified as "play girls," they excluded Than Moe Aye because "she around boys too much" (Tait, Interview, July 17, 2013). Similarly, while both girls swear on social media sites like Facebook and ooVoo, they noted that Win Lay swears too much. Their concerns were linked to the ways in which they were perceived in the community – as Win Lay noted that "people see," in other conversations with the girls, it was implied that seeing means talking. Thus the adults in the community monitored the girls' behavior not only by watching what they were doing, but then discussing their actions, and thus authoring them as not good girls.

The girls' negotiation of multiple discourses, including patriarchy and colonialism, was a reflection of Spivak (1988) referred to as "a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third-world woman' caught between tradition and modernization" (p. 102). Spivak noted that due to this movement between multiple oppressive discourses, "The subaltern as female cannot be heard" (p. 104). Yet, if we

consider Loomba's (2005) call for recognizing the multiple forms of expression of voice and agency during this discursive negotiation, we can look to digital spaces where this "shuttling" movement is often recorded through multimodal texts. For example, Rainbow shared multimodal compositions of herself with the following text superimposed on them: "I'm a girl.. Not a bitch.. Know How to respect to others.." and "I'm not Stupid.. >I'm a Girl I can respect.. to Other.!;)". When I asked her about these images in the multimodal interview, she explained that she composed them in response to how she was authored by adults in her community:

R: I was like, I'm not stupid, I'm a girl. Can respect to other. So cute.

D: That's cute. So what did you mean when you wrote that?

R: ...

D: What were you trying to tell people?

R: Um. Like, you know, a lot of old people, like ... yea. Or mom. Or neighbor. They think we're not like, not good girl.

D: Hm

R: Me and Tait

D: Really?

R: Yea! A lot, same age like me. Yea, cause we go outside every day and we talk with boys. Cause, we talk with boys is like,... we're talking with, we're brother. They think it's not brother and sister, just

D: They think it's more than that?

R: Mmhmmm

D: Huh

R: So I wrote it myself.

D: So, you're talking really to those old people, right?

R: Mmhmm

Tait and Rainbow sought to preserve an image as good, respectful girls in the public spaces in the community, while using the digital spaces to push the boundaries that were imposed on them in those physical spaces. They noted that they "play" boys and use "bad words." However, these boundaries were primarily pushed in online spaces – the boys they "played" were virtual boyfriends who often lived in other states. Within the community, they felt that their friendly, nonsexual, relationships with boys were acceptable during the day, but they became unacceptable after sunset. They used multimodal literacies to negotiate the norms and expectations of multiple discourses.

By producing a text that signified the "updating" of the group to TF'ez, Tait and Rainbow distanced themselves publicly from the girls who push the boundaries of those gendered norms and expectations in public physical spaces to levels they deemed excessive. Moreover, they aligned themselves closer to those who are establishing the norms for "girl" behavior, such as the "old people" in the community, even though they disagreed with them. Thus, through digital literacy practices they simultaneously pushed the boundaries imposed on them in their communities, while monitoring and sanctioning the behavior of their friends to remain respected members of the broader physical community. They drew on their experiences across multiple spaces to *rearticulate* their gender identities in relation to multiple spatial contexts based on the ways of knowing and being they developed across those spaces (Collins, 2000). Through naming and self-authoring, they were able to negotiate multiple discourses, while

"expressing in public a consciousness that … already exists" (Collins, 2000, p. 36) through multimodal literacies.

Enacting a student identity across authoring intersections

Although particular authoring processes, such as enacting multilingual, translocal, expert, and gendered identities are discussed here individually, it is important to note that these identities intertwined and intersected in practice with many others, given the particular context of interaction. One example that illustrates these intersections is the girls' authoring as students. Given the context of this project – the afterschool program, as well as the context of the girls' everyday lives – the school, all of the girls authored themselves as students. What being a student meant for them differed and reflected the four previously mentioned authoring processes – multilingualism, translocality, expertise, and gender.

Multilingualism

Although all of the girls were multilingual, they did not have many opportunities to develop their home language literacy following resettlement. As students, all, except for Tait and Than Moe Aye, were placed in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, and were thus authored by school spaces as language learners, despite their multilingualism. While ESL programs were designed to support their English learning, frequently these classes were perceived as the "easy" classes that did not support them across all content areas. For example, for most of the girls, science was particularly difficult. While their homework and assignments used learning supports, such as graphic

organizers, they were not differentiated for each of the girls' language proficiency levels. Thus, most were frustrated during the after school program, and needed support from volunteers and tutors in completing their assignments. While dictionaries are sometimes helpful, it was not so in this case because the girls did not have opportunities to develop their home language literacies, and therefore had a difficult time reading in their home languages. Many of them had Karen or Burmese dictionaries, but did not use them, as Love Each Day illustrated in the following interview excerpt (03/15/13):

D: When do you read Karen right now?

L: Here I don't read Karen

D: No?

L: I don't read Karen anymore, just only speak. Sometime I write.

D: So when do you write it?

L: Sometimes I have a heard time to understand the, the vocabulary word and I write down…

D: Okay, good.

L: Yep

D: And do you have a dictionary?

L: Yes, yes, but I don't like to use dictionary

D: Why not?

L: Too many each page, a, b, c…

D: Too much

L: I know

D: That's good though in case you need it

L: Mmm hmm

D: And when you write Karen do you write it in the Karen alphabet, or do you use the English alphabet

L: I use Karen, I know, I know I misses my Karen word, I don't know how to spell it in Karen, so I spell it in English.

D: So you…

L: I translate it, Karen in English (giggles)

D: So do you write it the way you say it?

L: I write the way I say it. I write it…

In this example, Love Each Day illustrated that she would write down words in Karen, when she did not understand them. However, she would do so by using a Romanized representation of the word, as reading and writing Karen was becoming difficult for her. She also indicates that "she misses her Karen" language, but again that using dictionaries was difficult. This provides implications for educators who are working with students whose home language is not in the Roman alphabet. Providing dictionaries in these cases may not be helpful, if students cannot read the alphabet of that language. Instead, providing opportunities for students to create their own dictionaries can be more helpful.

In addition to using Romanized representations of Karen and Burmese to support their learning, the participants also used language play to invent spellings in cases where they were not sure how to correctly spell a word. This practice was not encouraged in schools. As Rainbow noted,

R: Like, like, I mean like, I know like, when I write something, like sentence, it doesn't make sense.

D: To the teacher?

R: Yeah

D: And does she tell you what she would like you to do?

R: No. She says like, write, right word. Sometimes I spell wrong, sometimes it doesn't make sense, sometimes it don't work, yeah that's all. Like that.

Rainbow did not have the opportunity to play with spellings in school, which made her lack confidence in writing and in school overall. She did not like school, and often posted comments and photographs where she wrote "I hate school" or "F**k yo school." Disliking school did not mean that she disliked learning. In fact, she was one of the students who attended the afterschool program most regularly, where she would read eagerly and talk about her favorite books. And while writing was difficult for her, Facebook allowed Rainbow a friendly environment in which she could experiment with language and writing. She frequently engaged in invented spelling, such as writing "bing" instead of "being," "listing" instead of "listening," "nah" instead of "now," and "forress" in place of forest. These examples illustrate how she was experimenting with sound/letter relationships, which has implications for development of phonemic awareness, but also indicates that she desires to express herself through writing. The flexibility and freedom to experiment in digital settings allowed Rainbow an opportunity to develop an identity as a writer, and specifically an English writer, an identity that was not supported in academic spaces. This points to opportunities that schools have to make connections to multilingual literacy practices that take place in community spaces and draw on those practices to support students' academic literacy development.

The authoring process of being a multilingual student was shaped by the power systems that defined which types of multilingualism were valued. Thus in formal learning spaces, including both the community center and school, the students' multilingualism was not appreciated and the different languages they used in their daily lives were not viewed as learning resources. Instead, the focus was overwhelmingly placed on English learning and mastery, which lead many of the girls to feel that they needed to learn more English to be smart. This has implications for formal learning spaces and points to the need to engage with not only the wealth of students' linguistic resources to support their learning, but also to affirm students' multilingual identities and foster confidence in formal learning spaces.

Translocality

In addition to not supporting the girls' multilingualism, the formal learning spaces in the girls' lives also did not provide spaces that supported the girls' translocal identities. Their global experiences were recognized during cultural events and celebrations; however, on a daily basis, there was a lack of engagement with everyday cultural processes and their related ways of knowing and being.

Most of the girls described the transition to the United States and US schools as a challenging experience. For example, Than Moe Aye discussed being scared, as there weren't many people who shared her cultural experiences when she first resettled:

> T: No, when I come here, no, they don't come here for my country Thailand. They don't have no Asian here, just only me, and (name), and they are not in the same grade with me, but his brother did, and we have like some Nepal, (Karen

girl name), and that's it. Like five or six houses. In one class, one other they went there, nobody. No friends. That's why I learned English fast. Because I'm in the, just only black people, Mexican, and those two. And now, too much, too many Asian people. (light laughing).

D: So how do you feel about that change?

T: When I go to school, I feel so scared like, ohhh I don't have no friend, and I don't even know anyone, and when people are like two people in one class, two people in math class, I'm like wow, I'm scared, I don't even speak the language. Like they ask me what's my name, I'm not even say nothing, I don't even understand, I show my schedule like that (laughing). They, one month after one month, I understand a lot. First time I don't even know, they just say bad word to me, whatever. I don't even care, I don't understand even. And when I'm like, after one month, oh I'm so happy, like I just whatever I want, I go around. And new people come in, and I go around and translate for them.… They scared like me too. You know when they don't know like where to go in the office, I take them.

Than Moe Aye described the initial process of developing a translocal identity in her school – a point where she was able to share the cultural resources she had acquired following resettlement with other students who were not familiar with the American locality.

While students found opportunities to develop translocal identities in relation to being students in formal learning spaces, these opportunities were not fostered by these spaces. The community center participates in a local community cultural celebration,

where the students and their families bring food, provide artwork, and participate in performances. For example, Tait and Than Moe Aye created drawings for this event in which they described the differences between their experiences in the United States and in Thailand. They also participated in a dance performance, which they recorded and shared on Facebook. They seemed to enjoy participating in this event, similarly to Yoo Na and Tete Pasta who participated in a cultural celebration in their school. Both Yoo Na and Tete shared photographs from this event, where they both wore traditional Karen clothes. While they enjoyed participating – dancing, dressing up, and creating artwork – they also had very few other opportunities to engage with their cultural knowledge and resources in these formal learning spaces. These were representations that signified their "traditional" culture, but were decontextualized from their broader lived experiences. Being Karen or Burmese included traditional clothes, for special occasions, and eating particular foods. However, it also included a range of other experiences, such as participation in popular youth culture, which was shaped by their experiences in the United States. For example, while the community center staff made attempts to engage the youth with learning activities that were based in popular culture, these attempts reflected American mainstream popular culture, such as posing questions about popular movies, like Star Trek, or music groups including One Direction. These opportunities were rarely well received by the youth in the program, because this mainstream definition of popular culture and content did not align with what they considered meaningful and interesting. Instead, posing questions about Burmese hip hop artists, Korean dramas, or Karen love songs would have been much better received.

Although engaging with some elements of the girls' cultures allowed them to share their cultural knowledge and expertise, these opportunities were marginalized to special events. The formal learning institutions authored the girls as students who were different from the mainstream. This difference was highlighted and "celebrated" through opportunities to share food, and demonstrate dance and clothing. However, the girls' cultural knowledge and resources drawn upon in everyday activities and the complex translocal ways in which they authored themselves were not recognized in these formal learning settings.

Digital expertise

Although their cultural ways of knowing and being were not recognized in ways that supported their complexity and diversity, the girls drew on their digital expertise to support their student identities. These included finding information, sharing resources and strategies, and using technology to support test preparation. For example, one of the ways in which the girls enacted their identities as digital experts during learning activities was to search online resources to find information about their assignments. The girls could look up descriptions of plot lines from their assigned books, then, relying on their collaborative skills through technology, could share information. For example, Yoo Na would share information with her best friend in school through text messaging, as she explains below,

> Y: If I got computer technology, I don't know how to do it, I ask her, and I text her, do you know how to do it, and she says "no" and she text back to me, and

said "do you," and I said no. I said "help me" and she said, it's okay, I will do it.

D: So she's in the same school?

Y: Yea. we go same school

D: And you're in the same grade?

Y: Mmm hmm

D: So you can text in class, and be like "can you help me"

Y: Yea

The girls often studied together, and used technology to support their learning. For example, during one after-school homework session, I was working with Love Each Day, Mu Ka Paw La, and Yoo Na who were all enrolled in the same computer technology class. As they prepared for a midterm exam, they used digital flashcards which were posted on the class website to learn definitions of technology terms. During this time, one of the girls was using her notes application on her iPod to write down the terms and their definitions, while another took photos of the terms and definitions with her iPhone and thus made her own portable flashcards that she used to study for the exam at home.

While the girls enacted their digital expert identities to support their learning, they did not receive support from learning spaces that recognized those identities. In fact, they were not recognized as digital experts because they were not evaluated based on the skills they developed on their own. In their computer technology class, they were taught the intricacies of formatting documents, details that were not made meaningful because they were presented in a decontextualized manner. Similarly, in the after-school program, the girls were only encouraged to use structured learning activities, such as phonics computer

programs, that did not engage their digital expert identities. Thus while many opportunities existed in formal learning spaces to affirm the girls digital expert identities, they were not taken.

Gender

While formal learning spaces had many opportunities to develop the ways in which students' complex identities were supported, they also provided options for girls in this study to negotiate their gender identities. In particular, formal learning spaces allowed the girls to spend time with friends and engage in activities that they may not be able to do otherwise, given the particular gendered expectations of their communities. As many of the girls expressed, their families did not support them spending time outside, due to possibilities that they may interact with boys. However, formal learning was important for all of the families in this study, and they encouraged the girls to attend the after school program and to attend school. Similarly, most of the girls attended summer school, which allowed them to receive extra course credits and potentially qualify for early graduation.

While formal learning spaces were not supportive of the girls' translocal experiences, their gendered identities in relation to their role as students did allow them to develop their translocal identities. As Yoo Na described, most of her friends who remained in Thailand already had families and children,

> Y: Like um, me, now, I don't have a husband, right. In Thailand, like my friend, they are just like 12, 13, they have husband, they have a baby. I was like "ohhh, you guys got a baby, husband, ohhh" just only me that I had to stay by

myself. They born together with me. They already get married. I say, you guys leave me alone, you guys didn't wait for me.

D: What do you think about that?

Y: Ahhh, I don't think about it. Now I'm too young. Yea, also like at 12 years old, they get married too. That's so too young.

D: So, are they still in school when they get married, or are they done with school?

Y: If they get married, they quit school.

Having the opportunity to attend school, as well as possibly college, allowed the girls to delay marriage expectations. In a sense, the girls perceived school and community center spaces as places where they could spend time with friends without facing the pressures of adulthood and associated gendered roles and responsibilities.

The girls often used technology to share their friendly experiences in school. For example, Tete often shared pictures of going on field trips, including hikes and a trip to the University. In these photos, Tete and all of her friends looked liked they were having fun – they were smiling, making silly faces, or creating creative messages, such as spelling I <3 U with colored paper on the school wall. When I met with Tete for a follow-up member-checking interview, as she was preparing to graduate, she was a little sad about finishing high school, noting that her freedom was over.

Summary

Digital authoring was a powerful way for the girls in this study to negotiate their multiple complex identities through literacy practices. As a relational and translocal

process, it allowed them to enact multiple identities at the same time, even if they were seemingly contradictory at times, and in this process construct a fluid and dynamic representation of who they perceived themselves to be at those particular moments. It also enabled them to play with meanings and thus shape their translocal contexts and identities. This was particularly important given the rigidity of their immediate learning contexts – their schools, the community center, and their homes, which held particular expectations for behavior and identities. It is important to highlight that although the girls enacted similar identities – such as being multilingual, translocal, experts, girls, and students, they did so in different ways. The examples provided above illustrate only some of those ways, while pointing to the broader ways in which these identities are intersectional and enacted within complex power relationships and contexts.

The girls' digital authoring processes also highlighted the possibilities that exist across these learning contexts to become more reflective of translocality and translocal identities. In addition, the processes illustrated the power relationships that influence the extent to which the girls' identity enactments are possible, as well as why they are necessary. In the following chapter I will discuss the possibilities to incorporate translocal practices in formal learning contexts, such as afterschool programs and schools that serve diverse youth, including those with refugee backgrounds. In addition, I will consider these practices from a critical literacy perspective to illustrate the need to engage with the ways that power shapes ways of knowing and being, as well as ways in which literacy can be used to reimagine new possibilities for translocal belonging in multiple learning contexts.

CHAPTER 7

DIGITAL AUTHORING PROCESSES AND TRANSLOCAL LITERACY PEDAGOGY

When they arrive in the new country,
voyagers carry it on their shoulders,
the dusting of the sky they left behind
...
(Kahf, 1999)

When I initially conceptualized this study, I wanted to learn about the ways in which young women who were resettled as refugees to the United States engaged in authoring processes through digital literacy practices. My goal was to better understand the ways in which they communicated who they are or who they imagined themselves to be. And, one of the first findings that emerged was a seemingly simple one – they authored themselves as girls, and not young women as I initially authored them. Their identity enactments were typically carried out in response, and frequently in tension, to the ways in which they were authored by others – whether family, friends, community members, after-school program administrators and volunteers, or this researcher. This is a characteristic of the authoring process – it is dialogic and shaped by power. The power to name, define, create, play, enable, or limit. The purpose of this study was rooted specifically in a form of power that names and defines – the dominant discourses that author women and girls with refugee backgrounds in homogeneous ways. This study

focuses instead on heterogeneity and the girls' power, or in this case agency, to use literacy for the purpose of authoring selves. It shows how the girls author themselves and enact agency by rearticulating and naming their identities by drawing on their cultural wealth (Collins, 2000), while negotiating multiple discourses through multimodal literacy practices.

This study highlights some of the ways in which the girls authored themselves. These included authoring as *multilingual*, showing the richness of their linguistic resources and repertoires; *translocal*, reflecting simultaneously multiple global histories in their practices; *digital experts*, illustrating the complex skills they used to navigate digital spaces and tools; *students*, reflecting their daily lived experiences in school and afterschool contexts; and as *girls*, showing the complexity of their gendered experiences within translocal contexts. These identifications are broad, because although the girls enacted these identities, there were similarities, but also many differences. Thus, it is important to consider not only the importance of recognizing the heterogeneity within identity enactments, but also the centrality of these heterogeneous enactments in dynamic ways of knowing and being.

In this chapter, I focus on implications for educators across learning space by outlining the connections between digital authoring and learning and discussing the pedagogic possibilities that exist along these connections. These possibilities point to a need for a translocal literacy pedagogy, which takes into account the complexity of global lived experiences and heterogeneity of translocal identities. However, before discussing these pedagogical possibilities, I begin by summarizing the sociocultural framings which

served as the conditions for the girls' digital authoring, outlining in more detail the digital authoring process itself.

Sociocultural framings of digital authoring: A summary

This dissertation study used a critical sociocultural theory of literacy to frame the analysis of the authoring activities in which the girls participated through multimodal literacy practices. This theoretical perspective considers the actions that people take, such as digital authoring, as existing in dialogue within social networks and contexts and as being carried out through a range of meaning-making resources or tools. Considering the action of self-authoring from this broader sociocultural framing provides a better understanding of the authoring processes, which were the focus of the first research question. The sociocultural framing also illuminates the linguistic and cultural resources that guided the authoring processes, which was the focus of the second research question. This framework also helps address the third research question by engaging with global relationships and histories to describe the process of space production following resettlement.

Much of the research on refugee experiences focuses on pre-, during, and post-resettlement experiences; using sociocultural framings shows that these experiences cannot be easily separated. Even though this study focuses on the physical context after resettlement, that context is imbued with the histories, social practices, and lived experiences of various global localities that have influenced the girls' lived experiences. The girls often discussed their childhood experiences in refugee camps along the Thailand/Burma border, imagined experiences of life in Burma or the Karen State, and

experiences in the United States. For example, in our conversations, Tete often talked about the Buddhist temples that she wanted to visit someday, the games that she played with her friends in the camp (specifically the "elephant game," which was an active group game where players jump over each other), while also describing activities that took place in her home, community, and school in the US.

The girls' experiences across these physical and imagined localities influence the types of cultural and linguistic resources used in their social practices, such as when enacting their identities through authoring processes. While some of these experiences and social practices are shared – such as the experiences in the Thai camps and the languages used – they intersect with others, which are not generalizable to all who have lived within the same contexts. For example, for Tete, the elephant game was an example of a fun activity that she enjoyed, but was also used to highlight that many of her friends authored her as overweight – as she would be discouraged from participating in the game as she got older and heavier than her friends. Other, more intimate experiences, such as watching movies at a neighbor's house in Thailand, or strangers' stares and judgments cast on a body with a hijab, intersect with those larger shared contexts. These intersections impact not only the types of tools that are used to author oneself dialogically with global, local, and personal contexts, but also the design of spaces that are necessary to negotiate these multiple experiences and their associated identities.

Using a range of technical tools, such as iPods, iPhones, and computers, the girls used various linguistic and cultural resources to author themselves in digital spaces. These included languages – such as Karen, Burmese, "Burglish," and English, as well as cultural resources – such as content, including music and video, digital social networks,

and multimodal/digital literacy practices. In the process of utilizing these resources, they developed a range of skills, such as multimodal composing, navigation of digital spaces, and adaptation of language and literacy to allow communication across digital media through Romanization of home languages. These semiotic systems allowed them to use literacy to communicate how they see themselves in relation to their social networks and contexts.

These semiotic resources and tools were central to their enactments of *literacy as translocal practice* and were used to create translocal spaces that supported the girls' digital authoring. It is important to consider the intersections of these meaning making tools and spaces in which authoring processes took place. As Pennycook (2010) writes, "a dynamic account of linguistic landscaping as the active production of space through language, therefore, allows us to see how different linguistic resources are used, different worlds evoked, different possibilities engaged in as people use the linguistic wherewithal around them" (p. 69). Literacy as translocal practice reflected the multiple contexts, tools, and social networks, central to the authoring processes that took place. Understanding literacy as a translocal practice then accounts for diverse social practices that reflect the girls' complex ways of knowing and being rooted in multiple global experiences and imaginations. The girls used literacy practices to produce translocality in digital spaces, reflecting their hybrid ways of knowing and being and supporting their digital authoring processes. The following section will summarize what these digital authoring processes looked like in practice, while also highlighting the connections between digital authoring and learning.

Digital authoring

The participants in this study authored themselves in different ways as multilingual, translocal, digital experts, girls, and students. It is important to note that the way these identities were enacted differed, as authoring intersected with different lived experiences that shaped their enactments. Thus for example, although all of the girls have roots in the same nation state boundaries of Burma, and have all spent a significant portion of their childhood in Thailand, the languages with which they identify differ as do the proficiencies with which they use these languages. For instance, even though Karen was her first language, Yoo Na was also able to communicate in Po Karen because that was her neighbor's language. Therefore it is important to consider that identity enactments, such as being multilingual, represent a range of different types of multilingualism. However, it is also important to note that those differences are often not perceived or validated within local and global contexts. Being multilingual, for example, while also being authored as a refugee, can impact additional authoring in the dominant social contexts, such as formal learning spaces. This can include being authored as an English learner, as "at risk," or having interrupted, and thus, insufficient schooling, among many other possible ways to author someone as deficient and an outsider. Therefore it is important to consider both the heterogeneity that exists in these broad identity examples as well as in the broader categories, which provide the tools to speak back to the deficit oriented positioning that is often imposed in dominant social contexts.

To better understand the different ways in which girls who are resettled as refugees author themselves in digital spaces, it is then prudent to consider the process of digital authoring that shapes the identity enactments. As Mohanty (2003) theorizes, it is

necessary to look at commonalities as well as the hybridities between multiple ways of knowing and being, because "in knowing the differences and particularities, we can better see the connections and commonalities" (p. 226). Understanding the process allows a focus on the ways in which these identities are enacted differently, while at the same time considering the broader identifications as inherently complex, dynamic, and multifaceted. Considering authoring as a process helps promote an understanding of the different and intersecting ways in which power shapes identities and their enactments.

The conceptualization of the digital authoring process builds on authoring, or self in practice, described by Holland et al. (1998) who draw on Bakhtin's (1981) theorizing of dialogic identity negotiation. For Holland et al., the self in practice is produced in dialogue between an embodied sense of self and the self's multiple contexts. Authoring "occupies the interface between intimate discourses, inner speaking, and bodily practices formed in the past and the discourses and practices to which people are exposed, willingly or not, in the present" (p. 32). As they are negotiated in relation to other people, ideas, and contexts, identities in authoring are always evolving and relational. In recent years, through an increase in digitally mediated meaning making, the space of authoring has been extended to include digital locations.

As this study focused primarily on authoring in digital spaces, it brings attention to what I call digital authoring – a process of enacting identities in local and global contexts through the use of digital skills and technologies. In this study, it specifically focused on authoring through multimodal literacies in digital spaces, which typically rely on technical tools and collaborative skills that provide opportunities for identity negotiation that may differ from those in physical spaces. The digital authoring process is

defined by characteristics, which include that it is dialogical, multiaxial, translocal, and playful, while encompassing enactments of and/or responses to power.

Digital authoring is inherently dialogical, as it takes place in digital spaces, which are marked by social practices that reflect an ethos of collaboration, distributed expertise, and participatory meaning-making (Knobel & Lankshear, 2007). In addition, the digital authoring process was defined by creativity and experimentation, which enable identity enactments that may not possible be in off-line settings (e.g., being a playgirl, or being like a boy).

The girls in this study co-constructed knowledge and skills, such as for example collaboratively developing a way to represent Karen and Burmese languages in ways that are comprehensible to others who may not have received formal literacy instruction in these languages. Similarly, they authored themselves in relation to other participants and content in these digital spaces, while also reflecting a dialogue with nondigital social and historical contexts. So for example, an enactment of a student identity in digital settings is situated within the broader lived experience of being a student who is attending school and an after-school program after resettling to the United States. Moreover, these dialogic relationships are always situated in or reflective of power. While each identity enactment is also an example of power to define and represent a particular self, it is also always situated within a context where that enactment can be recognized, validated, or discredited. Moreover, it can be misrepresented or appropriated when not examined critically. For example, Rainbow's enactment of disliking school can be inappropriately constructed within formal learning spaces when a critical consideration for why she dislikes school is not taken. Consequently, the conditions that have caused the student to

dislike school (such as for example insufficient language support), would remain unexamined and unaffected.

The examples in this study illustrate that the digital authoring process is also multiaxial. This concept draws from Avtar Brah's theorizing of multiaxial locationalities, which reflect relational positioning within contexts. These locationalities represent "simultaneous situatedness within gendered spaces of class, racism, ethnicity, sexuality, age; of movement across shifting cultural, religious and linguistic boundaries; of journeys across geographical and psychic borders" (p. 628). The digital authoring processes thus reflect the dialogic relationships to multiple social and historical contexts, which in the case of the girls in this study, included histories of displacement and contexts of resettlement, and intersected with gendered representations and norms that constituted relationships to culture, ethnicity, race, and immigration status.

An example of multiaxial locationality in this study reflects how the girls who identified as Muslim were also identified as Muslim by American society due to a visible gendered signifier of a hijab. However, the sense of pride, community, and comfort that identifying as Muslim provided them was replaced by feelings of otherness. Self-authoring as Muslim carried different values than being authored as Muslim by non-Muslims, and all of the Muslim girls in this study chose to not wear a hijab in public, due to the ways in which they were authored by others. Digital authoring however allowed the girls to enact their Muslim identities, which they hybridized with their own understandings and representations of what being a Muslim meant for them. This included wearing the hijab in photos, while also identifying as girls who play boys – seemingly contradictory identifications that existed simultaneously in digital spaces.

These digital spaces allow for a negotiation of multiaxial identities in cases where the privilege of doing so is not granted in physical spaces.

Multiaxial locationality is in some ways similar to translocality – it reflects identifications with hybrid representations of self that are based on complex lived experiences. However, multiaxial locationality as a concept focuses more on the situatedness of self in various contexts, while the translocality focuses more on the contexts themselves. (Trans)locality focuses on the construction of space as relational and not bound by rigid boundaries. For example, identifying with a particular space, such as the Karen State, can include identifications based on lived as well as imagined experiences in that space. Translocality is a representation of spatial relationships that are hybridized and recreated in particular settings. This hybridity of spatial networks is recreated in a broader sense then, for example, transnational or diasporic networks, to reflect belonging to spaces that extend beyond geographic boundaries. In this study, translocality was produced in digital settings and represented the girls' relationships to the various spaces that they inhabited, physically or emotionally, in their lived experiences. It is important to note that they produced this translocality from a particular geographic location – an urban area in the Western United States, which is shaped by particular historical and social contexts that impact the way that translocality is relationally produced. The actual production of translocal spaces was carried out through literacy practices, and thus literacy was a translocal practice in this study. This allowed the girls to make worlds (Holland et al., 1998) that were reflective of their multiple intersecting identities, which were not always recognized in various spaces they navigated on a daily basis.

Finally, because the translocal spaces the girls created were reflective of collaborative efforts to bridge multiple global and social locations, the digital authoring process was also playful. Playfulness allowed the girls the power to make worlds that were reflective of complex lived experiences as well as to negotiate the tensions that resulted from contrasting norms and practices across these multiple spaces. Literacy was a tool for play, providing ways to signify and create meanings that provide opportunities to destabilize norms, even if only temporarily. For example, the girls in this study played with language, multimodal compositions, and representations of language to create new meanings, while at the same time identifying in particular ways, such as digital experts or funny girls. The playful aspect of digital authoring is particularly important given the frequently rigid norms that constitute many nondigital spaces, such as the afterschool program's rules of speaking English, not accessing content in home languages, and literacy being defined as a skill that can be acquired through rote practice. Digital authoring provided opportunities to represent a self in a multitude of nonprescribed ways, while drawing on the affordances of digital media.

Digital authoring and learning

In this study, there was an evident disconnect between school, the Community Center, and home literacy practices, which was maintained through discursive constructions of what constitutes learning. Academic learning was defined as what comes from schools, and was further developed and mirrored at the after-school program. Opportunities to engage with the literacy practices that the students used at home – those that they considered fun and play – were nonexistent. What is troubling is that

disallowing access to "fun" literacies in formal learning limits the types of knowledges and experiences that are validated, thus ensuring that formal learning spaces continue to affirm dominant ways of knowing, speaking, and being. Digital media, which is innately hybrid and fluid, threatens the existing systems and discourses around what constitutes knowledge and learning, and so its uses were limited to completing writing assignments and developing "academic" skills. For resettled youth who rely on open digital spaces to maintain their complex global identities and translocality, disallowing access furthers their displacement by indicating that their ways of knowing are lacking and thus, yet again, do not belong.

Students' identities, and related knowledges and interests, are deeply connected to various relationally constructed spaces. Therefore, it is important for educators to better understand how social practices, and the social, historical, and political contexts that underpin them, construct physical, virtual, and imagined spaces. As this study illustrates, digital settings provide opportunities for students resettled as refugees to negotiate hybrid intersections that reflect belonging to multiple global localities through language and meaningful content, which is typically not available in formal learning settings. Educators need to advocate for access to social media spaces in formal learning settings, and provide opportunities for students to make productive connections between the curriculum and meaningful content that is reflective of students' various localities. Thus students with refugee experiences would gain opportunities to take positions as knowledge-holders across learning spaces, while educators would be able to learn about their students' everyday lives, enabling them to serve their students better by broadening the conceptualization of academic learning.

As this study illustrates, there are many affordances of digital literacies that support learning and identities in out-of-school spaces. These affordances, which include playing with identities, language learning and maintenance, creative production of space, development of 21st-century skills, and negotiation of power relationships, can be drawn upon in formal learning spaces to support students' learning and identities as knowledge holders. For example, the girls in this study were able to play and experiment with identities that were not available to them in many learning spaces. As girls, they were able to construct a much more complex representation of what being a girl means to them, which sometimes included identifications that existed in tension with each other, such as being beautiful and chatting with boys. They were also able to play with language in ways that were not supported in formal learning spaces – such as creating meanings by using symbols, like Tete's $0 |~|4pp ¥ (so happy). But the girls also used a different type of literacy play, such as invented spelling, which supported their learning of the English language. They spelled words phonetically, when they did not know the correct spelling, while still communicating their intended meaning. This allowed them to develop their phonemic awareness, practice communication through writing, and author themselves as writers. They also used a Romanization of their home languages to create possibilities to communicate in Karen or Burmese through writing. In these ways they used digital spaces to learn and maintain languages, while authoring themselves as multilingual and multiliterate knowledge holders.

In addition to participating in digital literacy practices in flexible and dynamic ways, the girls also authored themselves as students who are knowledge holders and space creators, while developing their 21st-century skills. With an increase in

technologically mediated literacies, there has been a corresponding increase in attention to the types of literacy skills that are necessary for students in the 21st century. The National Council of Teachers of English (2013) describes that to develop these skills, students need to:

> Develop proficiency and fluency with the tools of technology;
> Build intentional cross-cultural connections and relationships with others so to pose and solve problems collaboratively and strengthen independent thought;
> Design and share information for global communities to meet a variety of purposes;
> Manage, analyze, and synthesize multiple streams of simultaneous information;
> Create, critique, analyze, and evaluate multimedia texts;
> Attend to the ethical responsibilities required by these complex environments (n.p.).

While the girls in this study did demonstrate some of these skills, such as their digital expertise through multimodal composing, collaboration, and design and sharing of information, their expertise was not always recognized beyond digital social networks. Therefore, there were notable limitations in the opportunities to apply these skills in formal learning contexts. The specific limitations included a lack of guidance for how these skills can be applied in formal learning settings, as well as necessary support for developing the critical aspects of these skills, such as critically analyzing content production and consumption. Moreover, while they were actively negotiating power relations in their everyday experiences, the participants did not receive support in critically engaging with these power relations. This points to possibilities for bridging academic learning contexts with out of school learning contexts in ways that build on students' expertise to support academic learning, while developing critical approaches to collaborative learning and inquiry.

Toward translocal literacy pedagogies:

Implications for educators

All of the participants in this study saw literacy in formal learning spaces as different from what they did out of school; specifically, out of school literacy activities were seen as fun or play, but not as learning. This implies that learning was perceived as only a school-based activity. When I asked the girls what they thought about incorporating their translocal literacy practices into formal learning activities, they expressed enthusiastically that incorporating these practices, such as music or multimodal composition, would support their academic learning. They were just never given the option to do so in the past. This aligns closely with existing theories that indicate that bridging home and school practices can support authentic academic learning, such as funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992), third spaces (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López & Tejeda, 1999), culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014), and a pedagogy of multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996), among many others. While these seminal examples of research have informed research on learning across spaces for approximately 2 decades, learning in many American formal educational spaces continues to reflect dominant ways of knowing and what Street (1984) calls autonomous literacies. By not recognizing multiple ways of knowing and being, many formal spaces are not inclusive of multiple students' identities.

Building on culturally sustaining pedagogy frameworks, as well as a pedagogy of multiliteracies and critical literacy, I propose an engagement with a translocal literacy pedagogy across learning spaces. This approach promises to engage students with translocal identities in ways that support learning through motivation, if used in

meaningful and authentic ways. Authentic engagement does not mean bringing in unstructured social media activities. Instead, it means engaging with content that students identify as meaningful, interesting, or relevant in ways that support learning and writing activities while reflecting the translocality of students' lives. For educators to engage with translocality, it is important to learn about the intersecting histories of students' daily lived experiences as well as how they negotiate those intersections in everyday literacy practices.

Recognizing school-based inequities and deficit-oriented frameworks toward non-dominant youth in American classrooms, scholars have worked to disrupt these approaches by offering asset-based perspectives to educators. These frameworks include resource-based pedagogies, such as funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992), as well as culturally relevant (Ladson Billings, 1995) and culturally responsive (Gay, 2000) pedagogies. While these frameworks provided educators with ways to engage with students' ways of knowing to support their learning in formal spaces, Paris (2012) argues for an approach that is not only relevant or responsive, but that works to sustain students' ways of knowing. He describes this new approach,

> The term culturally sustaining requires that our pedagogies be more than responsive of or relevant to the cultural experiences and practices of young people—it requires that they support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence. …culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling. (p. 95)

Culturally sustaining pedagogies encourage educators to engage not only with students' backgrounds but to also recognize the dynamic nature of culture and

cultural global contexts (Paris & Alim, 2014). Thus, this perspective provides an important grounding for the development of translocal literacy pedagogy.

In 1996, an international group of literacy scholars theorized a concept of multiliteracies to pedagogically respond to evolving trends in literacy that were shaped by an increase in technologically mediated communication and cultural and linguistic diversity (New London Group, 1996). They outlined that literacy practices are becoming increasingly multimodal, where meaning is produced through a variety of semiotic modes and transmitted through various media channels. They introduced a key concept of *design* to illustrate that meaning is not only actively produced in social contexts, but that through a design of meaning, people also become "designers of social futures" (p. 65). This indicates that literacy represents a tool that can impact and shape the contexts in which we live, as was evidenced in this study where the girls created translocal spaces that reflected multiple localities in which their experiences were situated. Incorporating a pedagogy of multiliteracies in schools requires four components – situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice. Situated practice engages with meaningful content, which in turn increases motivation for further engagement and learning. Overt instruction provides students with explicit scaffolded guidance through learning processes. Critical framing situates learning "in relation to the historical, social, cultural, political, ideological, and value-centered relations of particular systems of knowledge and social practice" to provide students with the necessary tools for critically evaluating their learning processes (New London Group, 1996, p. 86). And finally, transformed practice focuses on reflective practice, where students learn how to apply

their knowledge by "design[ing] and carry[ing] out, in a reflective manner, new practices embedded in their own goals and values" (New London Group, 1996, p. 87).

The pedagogy of multiliteracies has many similarities to critical literacy pedagogies, which are rooted in Paulo Freire's (1968) work on using literacy as a tool for fostering a critical consciousness among marginalized populations. Over time, critical literacy perspectives have evolved to focus on disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on sociopolitical issues, and taking action for social justice (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002). As Pandya and Ávila (2014) outline, the goal of critical literacies is: "to investigate manifestations of power relations in texts, and to design, in some cases redesign, texts in ways that serve other, less powerful interests" (p. 2). Unfortunately, literacy instruction in formal learning spaces has continued to favor autonomous ways of learning (Street, 1984), without incorporating critical as well as technological perspectives and meaning-making tools. As Beach, Campano, Edmiston, and Borgman (2010) indicate, "the result has been a remedial and deficit-based approach to teaching that has attenuated any rigorous curriculum" and which has neglected developing 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and reflection (p. 8). While technologies may be incorporated in formal learning spaces, the ways in which they are used continue to reflect autonomous literacy practices. Thus opportunities for students to engage with digital texts from an ideological perspective are often not provided.

Formal learning spaces need to provide opportunities for students to develop "skills and practices that lead to the creation of digital texts that interrogate the world; [and] also allow and foster the interrogation of digital, multimedia texts" (Pandya &

Ávila, 2014, p. 5). For example, educators can engage students in a critical discussion of privacy and safety in online settings in ways that recognize and build on students' experience and expertise. Similarly, they can engage students in discussions that interrogate dominant constructions and representations of beauty in relation to images that are edited and remixed for online distribution. Unfortunately, the opportunities for these types of discussions are becoming increasingly difficult as formal learning spaces limit access to many digital technologies and social networks.

Translocal literacy pedagogy promises to build on the perspectives of culturally sustaining pedagogy, multiliteracies, and critical literacy, as well as previous work that focuses on bridging learning across educational spaces. In addition, this pedagogy engages with perspectives on literacy as a spatial practice, focusing specifically on the social and historical contexts of literacies, as well as the relationship between identity and literacy within these various contexts. Lastly, the translocal literacy pedagogy broadens literature on best practices for teaching multilingual students who are learning a new language, such as English.

The following outlines the key characteristics of translocal literacy pedagogy, as well as examples of possible implementation. This pedagogy would provide students with opportunities to draw on multiple ways in which they author themselves to support their academic learning development, while fostering educational equity by developing critical learning communities. It would also promote developing an understanding of power across sociocultural contexts of students' learning and literacy.

The opportunities to develop academic learning, while fostering educational equity by developing critical learning communities would recognize student expertise,

such as collaboration, space building, 21st-century literacies, and identity and power negotiation; draw on students' skills and meaningful content to support learning and increase motivation; and foster identities as readers/writers across learning spaces. As outlined in Chapter 6, this expertise, as well as the associated literacy practices, are inextricably tied to the ways in which students author themselves.

To learn about their students' expertise, and thus some aspects of the ways in which students author themselves, educators can use methods similar to the multimodal interviews used in this study. For example, they can ask students to show them what they do with technology when they are not doing homework. The content that the students access and produce can then be used in structured learning activities, such as a narrative writing assignment or analysis of global issues, or developing learning support materials that connect to their individual learning interests. Connecting the curriculum to students' lives is important because it "encourages students to contribute to curricular discussion on the basis of their own experiences, both inside and outside the classroom, and enables the teacher to better gauge their prior knowledge to make connections to the [course] topics " (Haneda & Wells, p. 298). When the curriculum seems relevant, diverse students are more likely to feel like they belong in the classroom, where their affective and cultural needs are being met (Olson, Scarcella & Matuchniak, 2013). Hidi and Boscolo (2006) and Pajares and Valiente (2013) indicate that when tasks are relevant to students' lives in and out of school, they are also meaningful, and thereby promote motivation for engagement because students perceive them as valuable. It is important to provide opportunities for students to engage with not only relevant content, but to also feel that their translocal identities are being sustained in learning spaces.

Educators of students with refugee backgrounds who are learning English can draw on students' multilingual identities and encourage students to support their learning by developing dictionaries and writing in home languages. As this study shows, students were not comfortable using Burmese and Karen script; thus students would not find dictionaries in the traditional script helpful. Instead, asking the students to use the literacy skills they've developed in their home languages, such as "Burglish" in this study, would be more useful. Educators can also encourage students to apply playfulness to learning, such as using invented spelling demonstrated by the girls in this study. For example, because students like Rainbow were encouraged to "spell the right word" in school, they would feel constrained in school spaces. Allowing them to use inventive spellings would provide opportunities to explore writing as a process, and not just as something that reflected in correct spelling. In addition, students can experiment with sound/letter relationships to support their development of phonemic awareness. Educators can provide feedback on spelling (instead of graded corrections), while providing encouraging feedback that develops the students' understanding of the writing process. As a result, students can begin to develop their ideas through writing, and ultimately, author themselves as writers.

Educators can draw on the students' expert identities and encourage collaborative learning and writing in digital spaces, which would allow resettled students to build on the meaning-making skills they develop in out of school spaces. For example, as Yoo Na in this study indicated, students often complete assignments collaboratively, or seek friend's support through texting and chatting. In addition, as Win Lay indicated, the girls used digital media to critique particular social norms (e.g., photo whitening). However,

the girls did not have opportunities to engage with these issues with guided discussions, which limited opportunities to make connections to broader systems of power that shaped their everyday lives. Educators can draw on their students' collaborative skills and critical openness to support the development of critical learning communities in which students can collaboratively explore topics, while engaging with relevant content through analytic skills. Furthermore, collaboration allows all students to be active participants in their learning processes, while also enabling students to see themselves as knowledge holders (Li, 2012). Given that writing development and second language acquisition are social processes, formal learning spaces need to foster environments that support collaboration.

Within critical learning communities, translocal literacy educators can support the development of an understanding of power across sociocultural contexts of students' learning and literacy. They can draw on the students' learner identities to engage in designing critical learning activities to analyze positioning and authoring in text. In this way, students can be encouraged to critically discuss whose knowledge is validated, or for example, what counts as reading / writing in different spaces. Translocal literacy pedagogy can also support a recognition of intersectionality in students' lives by drawing on gender identities and engaging with multiple voices and perspectives. For example, students can work on writing autobiographies, which would help them develop their writing voice, reflect critically, and foster a writing identity (Ball, 2006). Incorporating digital materials in the autobiographies, such as videos, photos, or audio interviews or music can promote deeper engagement with the topic, while promoting self-directed learning, as well as a sense of purpose. Sharing the autobiographies in critical learning

spaces can help co-construct a community understanding of different voices and perspectives that constitute that translocal space. Lastly, students need to have opportunities to create spaces where multiple power contexts can be negotiated. For example, students can explore gendered aspects of the different spaces they inhabit and the ways in which these spaces author them in particular ways. Educators would need to provide students with overt instruction on how to use literacy to analyze multiple power relationships in their lives.

In a collaborative classroom, educators are active participants as well. By engaging with content that students care about in their daily lives they provide opportunities to make the curriculum meaningful for individual learners. In particular, "the act of embracing and implementing transnational and community literacies is one way for teachers to begin to build productive relationships with students who are English language learners" (Jimenez, Smith, & Teague, 2009, p. 16). In many cases, such as this study, the transnational and community literacies take place in digital spaces. Thus it is important to consider digital and social media spaces as valid and productive settings where students engage with meaningful content. In addition to building on students' knowledge, engaging with community-based literacies, such as those practiced in social media, allows the community of learners to build meaningful relationships in which all students are active participants.

Although translocal practices support hybrid writing and meaning-making practices, multilingualism and multiliteracies, and complex ways of knowing across spaces, they also contend with issues of power and specifically ways in which dominant discourses shape *what* constitutes knowledge and *whose* knowledge counts as valid.

Sustaining students' translocality has the potential to allow educators to create learning spaces in which both students and educators are learners, as well as knowledge holders and producers.

Translocal literacy pedagogy for students with refugee backgrounds

In this study, the ways in which participants were authored by the community center and by their schools reflects the particular discursive constructions of refugees as deficient – insufficiently educated and poorly prepared for learning and education. Moreover, a one-size-fits all approach was used in both formal learning spaces, where instruction that draws on students' linguistic and cultural resources was not implemented. Thus, the translocal literacy pedagogy includes special considerations for working with youth from refugee backgrounds. These considerations need to address the dominant ideologies that tend to homogenize the experiences of girls with refugee backgrounds, as well as the deficit oriented discourses surrounding knowledges and experiences of refugee students.

Engaging with refugee students' translocality in the classroom promises to disrupt homogenizing discourses that often surround these students. Translocal experiences are reflected in digital authoring processes, and thus these processes should be validated in school spaces. This can represent, for example, students' sharing of content they enjoy or an encouragement to write a letter to a friend. Very often, when refugee students are encouraged to share their experiences, the focus tends to be placed on their challenges and difficulties, or what Tuck (2009) calls "damage." Tuck and Yang (2014) encourage

for a reframing of the "damage" centered focus to desire-based frameworks that recognize that challenging experiences do not lead to deficiencies, but result in ways of knowing and being that reflect strength and astute sensibilities. They write, "This is not about seeing the bright side of hard times, or even believing that everything happens for a reason. Utilizing a desire-based framework is about working inside a more complex and dynamic understanding of what one, or a community, comes to know in (a) lived life (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 231).

Providing students with opportunities to engage with content that disrupts the damage-centered perspectives, while recognizing their heterogeneity through affirming translocality in the classroom is important. For example, as mentioned in Chapter 3, during her multimodal interview, Love Each Day shared a music video that was filmed in her camp in Thailand and which featured an actor who was also her sister's friend. Visually, this allowed her to connect with the locality of the camp, as well as to connect with her sister emotionally. But it also provided her with an opportunity to reflect on her beliefs about education. She described that the character in the video was doing heavy labor work as an adult, because he did not want to go to school as a child:

> L: This one here is so like, he's a bad boy and he don't listen to ... he don't listen to all the teacher and parent. When he grow up, he had to work hard. And, you know when he young, his mom told him to, to go to school. But he don't want it. He wanted, he go and play somewhere. And he grow up like this, he don't have education, and he have to work like crazy.
>
> D: Yea
>
> L: This one mean.

D: Do you think that's true, [in life

L: Mmmhmmm]

D: Yea.

L: A lot of people do that.

Although this video was filmed in a refugee camp, it highlights normalcy in a refugee camp environment – it focuses on childhood, a mother walking her son to school, and challenges of physical labor. This video could provide a meaningful opportunity to engage in a critical discussion about education, access, and ways in which students can be better supported in formal learning environments. This would reflect translocality as it reflects multiple localities, which are in this case Karen State (historically), Thailand (visually), and the United States (physically), with a focus on learning that can be connected to all of those localities.

Thus this example illustrates another important point – while translocality recognizes differences based on experiences across multiple global localities, translocal literacy pedagogy needs to also critically account for similarities that shape refugee experiences. In particular, it needs to address the gendered and racialized contexts of refugee experiences. For example, the girls in this study recognized that their communities had different expectations for their behavior when compared to boys. Similarly, the community center also had expectations that girls would, for example, prefer high heels or make-up kits as prizes, while boys would prefer soccer balls. In addition, policies such as hand-washing, lack of support for college aspirations, and lack of engagement with nondominant ways of knowing reflect discriminatory policies that many refugee students experience. Translocal literacy pedagogy should provide students

with tools to critically negotiate these experiences through multimodal literacies, while building on the ways in which they already do so in their daily lives.

It is also important to recognize the potential to make global connections by engaging with social media spaces. As a consequence of resettlement, refugee youth often lose connections to their family members, friends, as well as large communities of people who share their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Digital literacies and social media networks allow opportunities to rebuild those connections in the diasporic translocal spaces they co-produce with others. As these connections are frequently based around content the students find meaningful, which is not available in mainstream popular culture media, it also provides opportunities to engage with these relationships as well as content forms in classrooms spaces. This would allow students' translocal interests, as well as identities, to be reflected, in a collaborative translocal learning environment.

Summary

Gee (2000) argues that youth have significant opportunities to experience learning in out-of-school contexts, which often takes place in digital environments. In these out of school spaces, "adolescent ELLs strategically and agentively use literacy for their own personal purposes to express their personal feelings and opinions, seek and exchange information, maintain and develop social relations, construct desirable identities for themselves, act as language brokers for the family, and improve their English" (Haneda, 2006, p. 340). These spaces are interactive and fluid, and always situated within broader social, historical, and cultural contexts. As access to social media spaces, such as

Facebook becomes increasingly limited in schools and other formal learning spaces, it is important to consider the learning opportunities that are lost through such restrictive policies.

Young multilingual people use social media sites to negotiate their complex linguistic and social contexts and engage creatively with learning and meaning production in ways not supported in formal learning spaces. Furthermore, for youth who were forcibly displaced from their homes, digital and social media spaces provide opportunities to access and create connections that reflect the complexities and hybridities of their lived experiences. This points to the need to engage with these everyday literacies in formal educational spaces in meaningful and productive ways that support and value students' diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and networks. This pedagogy then calls attention to the need to engage with everyday literacies in formal and informal educational spaces in meaningful and productive ways to support students' diverse ways of knowing and being. Specifically, supporting meaningful learning opportunities requires understanding and drawing on the types of skills that are developed in translocal digital spaces. As young people with refugee backgrounds engage on a daily basis with content they value and find meaningful in their translocal lives, they develop specific skills, such as collaboration, language play, and multimodal learning and design. There are opportunities to engage with these skills in the classroom by providing ways in which these youth can draw on meaningful content to support their classroom-based learning (Alvermann, 2008) and be acknowledged as the translocal knowledge holders and savvy meaning makers they are.

APPENDIX A

OBSERVATION GUIDE

The observations focused on the 1) interactions, activities/actions, and the environment, 2) multimodal literacies in the students' literacy events and encoded texts. Below are some examples of the elements that guided my observations.

Interactions, activities, and the environment

I focused on the environment in the Mya Community Center, paying attention to the layout, visible signs (e.g., languages, student work, rules), resources (e.g., technology, language support, learning materials), as well as elements of the external environment (e.g., neighborhood). I also observed how the young women interacted with the environment (e.g., where they engaged with literacy, where they played, listened to music, talked to each other, etc.). I noted the demographics of the people present (e.g., gender, linguistic, cultural/ethnic/regional backgrounds, gender, age), what they were doing (e.g., talking, laughing, writing, drawing, listening to music, reading, dancing, etc.), how (what resources did they use), where, and with whom?

Multimodal literacy events

I began by general observations of *w*hat the young women do with literacy at the community center (e.g., learn [about science, current events, history], communicate, follow homework instructions, listen to music, etc.) and which encoded texts do they use (books, blogs, forms, etc.). I then focused specifically on multimodal literacy events, noting which representational modes are used and how. I also noted which resources they used during these events, who they interacted with, and how (e.g., languages, resources…), and where these events took place (e.g., are there particular places where certain types of literacy events happen, such as where do students engage in literacy events on their cell phones?). Additionally, I observed how students interacted with and/or through these events (e.g., how do they respond to texts or what texts do they produce), while also paying attention to the various locations that contextualized the events taking place (e.g., languages used).

APPENDIX B

STUDENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

At least two interviews were conducted with each participant. Topics covered included the girls' background, including their learning experiences, as well as experiences with multimodal literacies specifically. The purpose was to better understand 1) their perceptions of their sociocultural context, including their histories and experiences with migration, resettlement, and schooling; 2) their engagement with literacy and technology; 3) their authoring processes that took place through multimodal literacy practices, including identity enactments through which they performed their various selves. As the interviews were semi-structured, below are some examples of questions that were asked, while others were guided by the students' responses and observations in relation to the themes and the theoretical framework that guides this study.

Part I: Background

The questions in this section focused on the students' sociocultural context that includes their histories and experiences. For example, questions included – Tell me about yourself (including guiding questions like, Where are you from? Tell me about that place. What do you remember about it / what do you know about it?); When did you

move here (including guiding questions like Tell me about your move here. How did you move here? Did you come here by yourself? Do you like it here (explain)? Who did you know before moving here?); and What languages do you speak? Read? Write? (with probes to elaborate on When / where / with whom do you use each of the languages you know?). The questions also focused on the students' learning experiences, including their educational plans, schools attended, and learning that took place at home or other out of school spaces.

Part II: Multimodal literacy practices

The questions included the students' broad experiences with literacy (e.g., Tell me about the reading and writing you did this week; which languages are you most comfortable using for reading/writing); as well as specifically multimodal literacy experiences (e.g., Do you ever read / write with pictures, images, videos? Tell me about it). I also asked whether they used literacy to communicate with others, how (languages, tools), where, and for what purposes. In addition, I asked questions to get a better understanding of how the students participate in multimodal literacy practices in translocal and digital spaces. For example, questions included: Tell me about some other ways in which you use technology (e.g., Do you use it to read? Write? Draw? Watch movies? Do homework? Learn? To communicate with others? Facebook/Twitter/something similar?); Do you ever use technology to make something new? Tell me about it. What about to read, learn, listen to stories/videos about/from places outside of the US? Can you tell me about something you learned? Can you tell me about something you watched recently?

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